

LIVING WORDS:
OR,
UNWRITTEN SERMONS

OF THE LATE

JOHN M'CLINTOCK, D.D., LL.D.

REPORTED PHONOGRAPHICALLY.

WITH A PREFACE BY BISHOP JANES.

SECOND EDITION.

NEW YORK:
CARLTON & LANAHAN.
SAN FRANCISCO: E. THOMAS.
CINCINNATI: HITCHCOCK & WALDEN.
1871.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1871, by
CARLTON & LANAHAN,
in the Office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington.

P R E F A C E.

THE author of these discourses, Rev. JOHN M'CLINTOCK, D.D., was an eminent minister of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was very rich in natural endowments. His beneficent Creator gave to him a capacious, symmetrical, and active mind, a gentle and philanthropic spirit, a social and sympathetic nature. These qualified him eminently for friendship. They made him loving and lovely.

Earnest in his general life, John M'Clintock was especially so in reference to its supreme pursuit—the proclaiming of “the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.” Converted in his youth, immediately thereafter impressed by the Holy Ghost that he was chosen of Jesus to be one of his ambassadors, coveting earnestly the best gifts, and seeking diligently, by searching the Scriptures, meditation, prayer, and the use of the means of grace, to become a workman that needed not to be ashamed, he obtained a profound knowledge of the things of God and a deep experience of his saving mercy. By grace he rose up into the fellowship of the spiritual, the Divine, the Infinite. He walked with God.

In his early youth he had a thirst for knowledge.

His conversion to God only intensified this desire. He was the more earnest in the cultivation of his mental powers because he had a higher service to which to devote them. He therefore, through great embarrassments, courageously, energetically, and persistently sought a thorough collegiate education until he attained it. His student-life lasted until his death. He consequently became a man of varied, accurate, and profound scholarship. In the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, of experimental and practical theology, of Christian ethics and Church history, he was excelled by but few.

Dr. M'Clintock's studious and devoted life did not lead him into seclusion. He mingled with society, traveled and resided in foreign lands. With all these advantages he studied human nature most carefully and philosophically. He understood well the character and condition of our race. He knew what is in man: his religious instincts, the longings of his heart after God and spiritual and eternal verities: how these aspirations are depressed by the flesh, by the world, and by the powers of darkness: how hope and fear alternate in the heart: how light and shade pass over the mind: how men struggle to be good, and are borne away by their passions: how they reach out after something pure, and noble, and saving, and satisfying, but do not lay hold of it. He felt how much they need a pastor's sympathy and assistance. By his personal experience, and the study of the Holy Scriptures, and his converse with the disciples of Christ, he was well versed in the warfare of be-

lievers. He understood how their natural weakness lessened their spiritual strength ; how the world tempts them and Satan assaults them ; how keen are their conflicts, and how sore are their trials ; how they oftentimes yearn for sympathy and need a word of cheer.

We have drawn this brief and imperfect sketch of the author of these sermons that the reader may see how well he was qualified by natural endowments, by religious experience, by literary attainments, by theological knowledge, by his understanding of human nature, and his acquaintance with religious warfare, to preach Christ, to rightly divide the word of truth, "to feed the Church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood"—to be a Christian Pastor.

These sermons were preached by Dr. M'Clintock when he was Pastor of St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church, New York, in his ordinary Sabbath ministrations. They were delivered extemporaneously and reported by a stenographer. The reports were preserved by Dr. M'Clintock, but were not revised by him. They are very well reported. Still they are not exact reproductions of the sermons throughout. Stenography is a great and useful art, and has reached a good degree of perfection, but is not yet capable of giving to us the original discourse or an exact copy. Photography is a wonderful art, and produces wonderful likenesses, but it cannot duplicate our persons. We are greatly indebted to the artist for these photographs of Dr. M'Clintock's sermons. In them we see him as an

embassador of Christ, praying men to be reconciled to God. We see him watching for souls as one that must give account ; with all plainness instructing, reproving, and exhorting believers, and urging them to go on to perfection. We see him as a wise master-builder polishing the lively stones, and working them into right positions in the spiritual temple.

The sermons are eminently practical, yet they treat of the cardinal doctrines of the Gospel, and of some of the sublimest truths of Christianity. But as the author had both learning and good sense, the style is so clear and simple that the common mind will be edified by their perusal. Indeed, the book would be invaluable in our Sunday-school libraries. It is a rich addition to the evangelical literature of the Church. Its circulation will not be limited to the denomination of which he was so beloved a minister, but the volume will be sought and read by the spiritually-minded and liberal-hearted of other Churches. So he, being dead, will continue to speak to living multitudes.

E. S. JANES.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I. THE VISIT OF THE MAGIANS.	9
II. THE SONG OF THE ANGELS.....	30
III. THE MILE-STONES OF LIFE ...	45
IV THE WAY TO FORGIVENESS.....	66
V THE CHRISTIAN LIFE A GROWTH ..	83
VI. THE OPEN DOOR—AT HOME ..	103
VII. THE OPEN DOOR—ABROAD	120
VIII. THE GOSPEL ENOUGH	139
IX. THE PASTOR'S JOY	153
X. CHURCH FELLOWSHIP.	171
XI. THE IMPORT OF THE SUPPER... ..	188
XII. THE MORNING-STAR	205
XIII. THE CROSS A BURDEN.	222
XIV. THE PERILS OF IGNORANCE	236
XV. THE PLEASURE THAT DESTROYS. .	251
XVI. THE SIN OF SINS.....	268
XVII. THE WISDOM OF CHILDHOOD ..	284
XVIII. THE CHOIR OF VIRTUES ...	299
XIX. LOVE UNUTTERABLE	317

SERMONS.

I.

THE VISIT OF THE MAGIANS.

We have seen His Star in the East, and are come to worship Him.
Matthew ii, 2.

THE season of Advent, the time just before and just after Christmas, including Christmas itself, is observed throughout almost all parts of the Christian Church. In the farthest East, the earlier home of Christianity, you will find it observed ; in the Roman Church, throughout all its vast dominions, you will find it observed ; and in the Protestant Churches generally, except in those which, by perhaps a natural reaction, not so much from Romanism as from Romanizing Protestantism in England, in the time of Archbishop Laud and of Charles II., were driven into the other extreme of Puritanism. But even among these the Church is coming back again to the observance of those times observed of old, which are founded in the Scripture.

The Methodist Church has always, when she has come up to the usage of her founders, observed

the blessed Christmas time. Luther made this distinction between the festivals established by the Church of Rome in honor of men, and those which had their roots in the Gospel narrative itself; that the one should go away with Rome and Popery, and the other—those which had their roots in the Gospel—should and ought to be retained in the Church. See how it works. In this season of Christmas and Advent, in the Churches which observe it, the minds of children, and even of the middle aged and the old, are turned of necessity to think upon the birth of Christ, and the circumstances which preceded, accompanied, and followed it. Gifts are given, and observances made of various kinds, all tending to bring up these things in the mind and inspire the imagination, especially of children, if we always, as we should do, teach children the use of these things: that we give our gifts on Christmas-day because on Christmas-day God gave his greatest gift to the world, and that, by a very beautiful association throughout Christendom, the day is appropriated for kindly gifts from a father to his children, from brother to sister, from friend to friend; and every gift given in a Christian way, and with a true Christian remembrance, brings the mind to think of that great gift which embraces all others, for if he freely gave us his only Son, “how shall he not with him also freely give us all things.”

The text which I have chosen is one of the most beautiful which refer to this Advent season. It is the festival of the incarnation, of God manifest in the flesh. Our text speaks of the visit of the Magians, the wise men from the East, and their declaration when they arrived at Jerusalem, "We have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him." This text is appropriated, by those Churches which carry festivals further than we are inclined to do, to the Feast of the Epiphany. In the earlier ages the Epiphany was observed at Christmas by the Western Church, and in the Eastern Church on the 6th of January, and both united in fixing the latter date for the Feast of the Epiphany—the manifestation of God through Christ to the Gentiles. The text is beautifully appropriate to the time of Christmas. This star, which appeared to the wise men in the East, appeared to them at the time of the birth of the Lord Jesus ; and we cannot more appropriately remember the birth of Christ, nor can we get from the history of that birth its full lessons more beautifully, than we can in connection with this visit of the wise men from the East.

The narrative itself is an exquisitely beautiful one. It is one which seizes upon the heart of the world by a natural sympathy ; and you cannot speak of any thing that will attract little children's minds, or inflame youthful imaginations more quickly, in

all the Gospel story, than to tell them of the star in the East. And so throughout all Christian poetry, this theme has been taken up in song by some of the most quick and vivid imaginations in the Church. And in the realms of profane poetry, in art, in legends, in sculpture and painting, for age after age, the visit of the wise men has been one of those themes of which the world never tires, and never will. All the elements of beauty are contained in this simple narrative. Let us contemplate it this morning, and not alone that our eyes may be charmed by its beauty—that we may gather up what poetry has clustered about it—but that we may get at its deep and spiritual significance.

Let us first see what is meant, and then gather from that meaning what lessons we can of practical duty and privilege for ourselves. And these are the points of the sermon.

What did this visit of the wise men mean? What does it signify especially in the scheme of salvation? Its great significance is — what the Church makes it to be in the festival of the Epiphany—the revelation of God to the Gentiles. Look at the persons to whom this manifestation was made. Who were they? Wise men from the East. They were not Jews, remember that; they were not Jews, but Gentiles. The word here translated wise men, is the same as that in other places translated

magician ; so that the word has two meanings, a good one and a bad one. The magicians formed a sacred caste, or college, under the Medo-Persian Kings and under the Chaldeans. Their position was a high one ; they were the teachers and priests of the people, and the leading philosophers for many ages. It was considered a necessary part of a princely education among the Median Kings, and afterward among the Medo-Persians, that the young prince should be instructed in the peculiar wisdom of the Magians, and none but the scions of royal houses were permitted to know all the mysterious learning they had acquired. This learning embraced every thing in the higher culture of those ages, and was known in its development as the law or laws of the Medes and Persians, which changed not. The laws of these Eastern nations were the fruit and outgrowth, and at the same time the criterion, of the culture and civilization of the people, and its very highest culture and highest civilization. Daniel did not hesitate to become the chief of the Magians, when, at the court of Nebuchadnezzar, who had called him to the head of their college, he undertook the office and filled it nobly. In later ages the influence of these people declined ; but still, at the coming of Christ, I think there can be no question that these oriental philosophers represented the very highest culture of the land in which they lived. Their studies included

astronomy, connecting with it astrology ; for then men almost invariably believed that the stars had a specific influence on the course of human life, and were indices and exponents of human life, and might be used to prognosticate the future. The stars were believed to foretell or accompany great political changes, the rise and fall of empires, and the birth of great princes who should be of vast importance in the history of civilization. These were the men of whom our text speaks in the simple words, "There came wise men from the East unto Jerusalem."

I have told you that the substance of this text is the revelation of God to the Gentiles. These men came as ambassadors from the heathen world. They brought with them not only myrrh and frankincense and gold, but the long-treasured anticipations of ages, the unconscious yearning of the Gentile nations, going on from year to year, and century after century, first under the impulse of the earlier prophecies recorded in the Bible, and then under the combined influence of all science and learning and art—all bringing up men to the great consciousness that there must and should be some day a great Deliverer to raise up the human race from the depth of its degradation. They came, the embodiment of heathendom, to see the new light that was to dawn upon the nations in the day of their deepest darkness ; since for them this star, that

they saw in the far East, as they were watching the courses of the planets in the study of astronomy, this star was the voice of God as spoken by his prophet, "Arise, shine ; for thy light is come ; and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." And so, brethren, these men came the representatives and ambassadors of all heathendom, and came at the bidding of God. They did not come as volunteers, as philosophers to search out a mystery, or add to the stores of their learning. No ; they came because they saw the star—they came because they were drawn by the grace of God. O how beautifully, here in the very opening of the history, before any of those who surrounded the cradle of the infant, no matter what thoughts they had of his Messiahship, had dreamed at all of the unfolding of the vast purpose of God for the conversion of the Gentiles and the bringing in of the "isles of the sea,"—how beautifully is here illustrated that infinite grace which was to reach all mankind !

The sign itself, and its peculiar fitness, deserve a moment's consideration. You remember I said they were astronomers watching the stars. Here is a beautiful passage in Donne (who, in the midst of so much quaintness, has so much expressive fullness) bearing upon this point : "God speaks in such forms and phrases as may best work upon those to whom he speaks. David, who was a shepherd before,

God took to feed his people. To the Magians, given to study the stars, God gave a star to be their guide to Christ at Bethlehem. To those who followed him to Capernaum for meat, Christ speaks of spiritual 'food.' To the Samaritan woman at the well, he preached of the 'water of salvation.' Christ makes heaven all things to all men that he may gain all."

The fitness of this star as a representation is still more apparent when we come to consider prophecy, and history corresponding to prophecy—"I am the bright and morning star"—and the prophecies of the Old Testament which had their fulfillment in him, and that wonderful prophecy, which came out of that dumb prophet Balaam, who had so little apprehension of the great part he had to play in the development of God's Church: "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel." This idea runs throughout the whole current of prophecy. Let us listen to it in that grand sixtieth chapter of Isaiah: "For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising: all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of

the Lord." And again in the forty-fifth chapter : " The labor of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine : they shall come after thee ; they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee ; and there is none else, there is no God." And again in the Psalms : " They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him ; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents : the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him : all nations shall serve him."

And so the current of these prophecies mingled with the current thought, not merely of the Jews, but of all nations. These wise men of the East had doubtless been imbued with the spirit of these predictions, and they carried along with them, age after age, these promises that there should come a king, to whom all other kings should bow ; that there should come a wise man, before whom Solomon's wisdom should " pale its ineffectual fires ;" a Redeemer, who should bring not merely the chosen people, but the ends of the earth, to fear him.

And so they came ; but their visit was not appreciated or understood by those who surrounded the cradle of the infant Jesus, who received this visit as in the natural order of things, and by no means appreciated its force and meaning. Even the disciples

had to be taught afterward by very hard lessons that the Gentiles were to come in ; that the scepter had departed from Judah, and the Jews were no longer God's elect ; that the elect had become reprobate, and the reprobate elect ; that the Gentiles were to be grafted on the living vine. As Paul writes, in the second chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians : " Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past ; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." The breadth and length, then, of this visit of the Magians we find was, that it was the type of the great glory of Christendom that Christianity was to be for all the nations, with no limit of place or of race ; that the religion founded by this infant lying in the cradle was to be the religion of all classes of men in all times until time should be no more.

When on their journey they, at each sunset, saw the star in the East they followed it nightly, watching where it would lead them, and it led them on and on, perhaps for two or three months, until they reached Jerusalem. They expected that it would lead them to Jerusalem, because they had heard that out of

Judea the King of the world should come, and was to be a King of the Jews. What did they naturally do? As soon as they came to Jerusalem they went to the royal palace, supposing this new monarch was to be born there. You have heard how Herod was troubled and disturbed when they came there, though they came not to trouble or disturb him, but to ask for this new prince in the most natural way, and in the most natural place—in the palace of the King, on Mount Zion, surrounded by the mountains. But how was it? Not there was Christ born. No, no; for Jerusalem there was to be no such glory as that the Saviour should be born there, but only the shame of being the place where he should die. Jerusalem, which had covered herself with so many idolatries, and was at last to cover herself with so vast a crime, was not to be honored with being the birthplace of the Saviour. So they followed the star again, and found that it led them to Bethlehem, a little village not known in history, but mentioned in prophecy. “And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.” And again: “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come.” And now the glory of Jerusalem was ended forever. There was no hope of a king, in the sense of the Jewish idea

of a king, ever again to live in Jerusalem. The palace stood, to be sure ; but palace and temple alike were soon to be whelmed in ruin, which should know no resurrection. The glory had departed, and departed evermore. And so the wise men went not to Jerusalem, but to Bethlehem, and came there, bringing their gifts of gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

In this narrative we find the manifestation of God to the Gentiles most beautifully typified. Now let us gather the fitting lessons from this great truth. The first is, that as at that time the highest culture and highest learning were brought by the Magians humbly to the cradle where the Lord Jesus lay, so in all times of the Church, and more and more as the Church advances to her universal dominion, will all science and learning remain tributary to the progress of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are told that kings used to come, and queens, from north and south, and east and west, to listen to the wisdom of Solomon. In that cradle, in the humble home at Bethlehem of Judea, there lay a wiser than Solomon, and, under the guidance of the star, the wise men from the East recognized their Master. Could it be without an idea of this typical meaning that these wise men were brought to humble themselves there ? You will find, throughout all the history of the Lord Jesus, some element to indicate his

glory in every act of his humiliation. So in this birth of his in the stable at Bethlehem, amid the humble surroundings that showed his humiliation, here was this gleam to show that all science and art, all learning, all taste and culture and wealth, were to be made submissive to that infant child. The wise men came, the type of all wise men : they brought their gifts, the type of all the world's riches ; their frankincense, the highest offering that could be made before the temple of any god ; the myrrh, which embalms and preserves the remains of those we cherish ; the gold, the embodiment of all value, the highest representation of value then as it is now, and as it always will be. They brought all these and offered them before the cradle of the infant Jesus. Do we not find here the lesson for the Church, that all learning and culture and art, all growth in civilization and advancement in taste, should be made tributary to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus ? that they have no beauty otherwise ? And again we find, conversely, that all art and civilization and advancement in modern ages has been due to this very Christianity of which this cradle in Bethlehem was the beginning. All that distinguishes us from the heathen and uncivilized nations has its roots in Christianity. If our laws are better than those of the Hindoos, it is because we have the laws of Moses and the life of Christ ; if our art is purer than the art of the Chinese, it is because the roots

of this purity are to be found in the histories of this Gospel, just such histories as the visit of the Magians ; if the painters of modern Christendom, of a century or two ago, excelled the painters of past periods and ancient glory, it was because the Christian idea permeated art at that time more than at any time before or since ; and, just in proportion as the Christian idea itself permeates the art and learning of an age, will the art and learning of that age be a permanent and abiding culture. I am not speaking in riddles, or making mere assertions. The more you study art and learning, the more you will find that the Christian idea is the centre of them all, and as the Christian idea fades away these will fade. Painters do not paint now as painters did a century or two ago, and architects do not build as architects built centuries ago ; and there are no structures of modern date equal to those grand edifices which grew up three, or four, or five hundred years ago under the hands of men whose names are now for the most part buried in oblivion, edifices of imperial magnificence, and wondrous and almost celestial beauty. And why ? Because painters did not say, " How shall I make money by this art of mine ? " Architects did not ask, " How shall I get fame by this art of mine ? " Even though they did aspire to fame, their names are forgotten ; but you will find, if you go into the deep cellars of some of these vast

and mighty structures, in the corner a foundation-stone, and on it perhaps the architect's name, and perhaps not ; but you will find carved on it a Latin sentence, which says, " This building is for the greater glory of God." And just in proportion as that idea filled the mind of the artist as, in his midnight musings, he endeavored to bring out from his rich imagination and clear thought a structure that should last forever, just as his mind was exalted and his taste purified by this grand conception, do we find his conception itself to be elevated, and the execution of it to be a thing of beauty—beauty to last for evermore.

Let us learn on this Christmas-day to take all our learning, art, and cultivation, as God gives us opportunities to get it, and bring it all to the foot of the cross of the Lord Jesus our blessed Redeemer. And then, when any man comes to you with any proposition which shall divorce Christianity from art or from learning, a proposition for a school that shall be without a Bible, a college without a prayer, a university which shall separate secular studies from sacred, and in which men shall be taught the learning of the Greeks and Romans, but not the word of God, tell him the wise men came from the East to Jerusalem with their gold and frankincense and myrrh, and laid *all* before the cradle of the infant Jesus. O how grandly does our duty as Christian men come

up before us in the presence of such thoughts as these! that to us is given the culture of the nation, and intrusted the education of the future by the hand of God: to say what this great America shall be. What it shall be, depends upon the Churches of the time; what it shall be, depends upon the schools; what it shall be, depends upon the colleges and universities of the time; what it shall be, depends upon the newspapers; and what these shall be, that is for you to say. God help you to say it with a just sense of your responsibilities! God help you to do as these wise men did when they came from the East! humbly, and with what frankincense you have, with what myrrh you may possess, with what gold he has given, with what lustre of intellect you may be endowed, to come with it all to the cradle of the child Jesus, and say, "Here, Lord, they are thine; take them to advance thy Church and glorify thy name."

Observe that the shepherds, who were Jews, received a revelation of a quite different kind from this revelation which the Magians received, who were Gentiles and philosophers. The shepherds were watching their flocks at night, and they had been accustomed for thousands of years to revelations by prophets, by angelic ministries, by dreams and visions; so when the news was to come to the shepherds as the type of the Jewish people—for we have both

Jews and Gentiles typified in those immortal groups that shall never die out of the memories of men—the shepherds saw an angel, and heard the voices of angelic company singing “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.” If they had seen a star it would not have attracted their attention. Stars had come and gone often and often, and they had not noticed it; and so, on the other hand, angels would have been nothing to the Magians. There would have been no fitness or aptness in such a vision to them. The simple, unsophisticated Jewish mind was attracted by the angelic vision. On the other hand the Magians, intellectual, cool, crafty, perhaps accustomed to deceive others, the representatives of the philosophy and skepticism, but at all events the philosophy of the time, were attracted by a natural object—a new star. When the Magians saw it they recognized it at once, for they knew every star in the heavens.

Do we not find here typified the union of science and religion in the Magian’s vision of nature? In the Christian Church the union, the mystic marriage, of science and religion is brought to its perfection, and what God has put together let no man put asunder! It is the saddest sign of the time to see the effort made by some men who are cultivated and scientific to leave God and religion out of the case entirely; and it is one of the best symptoms, that

the best educated and most scientific men are religious and godly men ; that the highest intellects have been simple, child-like, Christian intellects. The great discoveries in science have been made by men who believed in God and trusted in Christ. Newton, the greatest and most magnificent intellect that has yet appeared, came, like these wise men of the East, child-like and humbly to the foot of the cross of the Lord Jesus, with all the vast treasures of his noble thought, deeming himself to be but an infant in the presence of the Saviour.

Finally, the lessons which we get from this beautiful narrative are these : first, *promptitude* to obey the voice of God. How was it with these wise men ? Three words are put into Cæsar's mouth, and made the types of imperial mind and achievement from that day to this : "I came, I saw, I conquered." There is something imperial in the very words of this text : "We have seen, we came ;" "we have seen his star, we have come to worship him." The two things together, nothing between them ; no long-drawn argumentation, no hesitation or uncertainty, or waiting for other warnings ; no asking of spirits from the deep, no summoning of the dead to rise ; nothing of all this. "We have seen his star, and are here." So let it be with us. How often have we seen the star, heard the voice of God, and have waited and sought a brighter light. If these Magians could

come from afar simply at the sight of that silent star, how should it be with us, who have the Sun of righteousness shining brilliantly upon our path of life, and not merely silent stars and suns, but the myriad voices of nature and the Gospel?

We also learn from this narrative the lesson of *perseverance* in obedience. They saw the star in the East hundreds of miles away; they traveled night after night, and watched when it disappeared in the day, until they came to the place. The day-eclipse did not hinder them. Uncertainties they may have had, and they may have met with attempts on the part of those who met them to turn them back, as deluded in the search, but these did not hinder them; they went on and on, until at last the star stood over Bethlehem. Particularly to the young this point applies: "We have seen his star in the East." In the beginning of your days you have seen the star of Bethlehem, and are willing to follow its light. What I am saying has been the history of many; by and by the glare of earthly day may be too strong for the light of this star. What shall you do then? In childhood and youth it shines beautifully.

"Star of the East, how sweet art thou
Seen in life's early morning sky,
Ere yet a cloud has dimmed the brow,
While yet we gaze with childhood's eye."

Some have followed it through all of life. To some, whose heads are gray, and limbs tottering, it shines brighter than it did in youth. Let us to-day gaze on this star, each of us, and raise our thoughts to the sky :

“Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid;
Star of the East, the horizon adorning,
Point where our blessed Redeemer is laid.”

And may we all breathe, in our devotion, the spirit of those beautiful lines :

“We come not with a costly store,
O Lord, like them of old;
The masters of the starry lore
From Ophir’s shore of gold.

“No weeping of the incense tree
Are with the gifts we bring;
No odorous myrrh of Araby
Blends with our offering.

“But still our love would bring its best,
A spirit keenly tried
By fierce affliction’s fiery test,
And seven times purified—

“The fragrant graces of the mind,
The virtues, that delight
To give their perfume out, will find
Acceptance in thy sight.”

The last lesson is *confidence* in God for the triumph of his Church. Let us trust him for a glorious

future, and believe that in Christ there shall be hereafter a complete subjection of all principalities and powers ; that the isles of the sea shall come to him, and the very ends of the earth be his ; the heathen be given to our Christ for his possession, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his inheritance ; “ the Gentiles shall come to his light, and kings to the brightness of his rising.”

II.

THE SONG OF THE ANGELS.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.—*Luke ii, 13, 14.*

ON last Christmas-day I spoke to you of the appearance of the “star.” This star, as well as the other phenomena attending the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ, had this peculiar and distinct meaning, namely, that heaven and earth were brought together in the birth of our Redeemer. The babe lay in the cradle, the star moved in the firmament. The star in the visible heaven (always typical of the spiritual) pointed to the birthplace of the child on earth. The same thing is true of this shepherd story in the text. So simple are these narratives, so exquisite, so rich in the elements of spiritual significance, as well as of poetry, that they have taken the strongest hold upon the mind and imagination of the race. This tale of the shepherds is one of the most beautiful that you can tell to your children. Even in the earliest childhood, it will make their little ears open and their eyes dilate with wonder. The angelic

visit, like the quiet movement of the star, indicates that in the birth of the child at Bethlehem heaven and earth are brought together. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men. This was not the song of the by-standers in the stable at Bethlehem. No; the cradle was in the manger, and the manger was on the earth, and the child was born here; but this angelic song was sung by the choirs in the upper world. The shepherds were upon the earth; but the shining throng that appeared at the utterance of the angel and joined in this glorious song—these came from afar, singing, as they descended from the distant heaven, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." Heaven and earth rejoiced together over the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem. And so, in fact, the whole problem to be wrought out by Christianity was just this: how earth and heaven were to be brought together; how man could be reconciled to God; how the separation which sin had made was to be brought to an end; how the awful chasm between infinite justice and purity, and man's guilt and vileness, was to be bridged over. This was the end of our Lord's coming into the world; this is the sum of Christianity. This question, too, is the problem of all true philosophy and of all philanthropy. Some men call themselves philosophers and philanthropists who are ashamed or

afraid to call themselves Christians. If any of you belong to this class, I ask you whether there is any problem to be solved by civilization that is not implied in this one single question, "How shall man be reconciled to God—how shall the purity of the divine law be illustrated in the life of man on the earth?" And is not the answer to this question the sum of Christianity? Was it not given in the angelic song, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men?"

The song, in fact, is a proclamation of the objects of Christianity. Christianity proposes these objects, and proposes no other; and whoever, through the pulpit or the press, or in any other way, pretending to be a Christian teacher, does propose ends which cannot be summed up in those three ideas of the angelic song—whoever does so—I warn you to be on your guard against him. The object of Christianity is *all* here—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." That is the whole of it. You may run out each single sentence of it into a whole system of theology, you may make books about it, and have philosophy founded upon it; but, after all, you shall find the whole of Christianity to be summed up still in the song of the angelic host. And when, my brethren, in the upper land we dwell in peace and rest for evermore, we shall hear "a great voice out of heaven

saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God," and our praises shall all then be summed up in unity with the voices of angels and of arch-angels in the song of "Glory to God in the highest ; he hath visited and redeemed his people." That shall be the last, the eternal song, as it was the song of the angels in the beginning.

So the life of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the earth was the working out and development of the song of the angels. It was "Glory to God" illustrated in his obedience, in his personal sacrifice, in his prayers and teachings, in his consecration and death. It was "peace" in all the utterance of his lips ; peace beaming from his gentle eye ; peace spoken by daily acts ; peace in his bearing humbly and patiently the buffetings, and strokes, and insults, and injuries that were put upon him. His life was peace, for he was the "Prince of Peace." It was "good-will to man," for every thought, word, and act of that blessed life was the translation of God's infinite love into forms visible to the mortal eyes that saw him.

We have then in our text a summing up of Christianity. I shall not set it forth to you in dogmatical terms on this blessed Christmas morning, when we are here to rejoice together, as eighteen hundred years ago the heavenly host rejoiced in welcoming

the Babe of Bethlehem. I shall give no doctrinal statements except to show the grounds for our rejoicing.

“Glory to God in the highest,” is the end and object of Christ’s coming. But it is put at the very beginning of the song of the angels, and so it is the first thing to be wished for in the experience of every Christian. This is to be the end of the Christian’s strivings, as it should be the beginning of all his praises—“Glory to God in the highest.” It is the motto of every humble, earnest, truthful soul. It is the heart’s desire of every man that truly seeks to be saved by Christ’s death, and to live in Christ’s love. It is only when we allow the world to get hold of us; when we permit a worldly spirit to get the better of Christ’s spirit within us; it is only then that we find the glory becomes dimmed, and this song is *not* the first utterance of heart, lip, and daily life. When we fall back among the men of the world we discover that they are not ready to join with the angels in giving glory to God; they are not pleased with the division and distribution of God’s blessings which the angels make. “Glory to God, and peace to men”—that is not the object of their ambition or striving in the world. No; the pride of man rather says, “Let me have it; let me have the glory.” But God says, “I will not give my glory to another.” The pride of man says, “I

will have it for myself. Peace—let it go if need be ; I will have the glory at all risks, even though I live in strife forever.” So you see there is a conflict between God’s arrangement of his gifts, and man’s pride of heart and will.

We may test ourselves on this beautiful Christmas morning, we may test our amount of Christmas joy, by this question : Are our daily lives an embodiment of this glory to be given to God on high, or are they mere struggles to attain wealth and the applause of men ; struggles for position, and to gratify our pride ; struggles in some way to secure, not glory to God, but glory unto ourselves ? O how this song of the angels strikes at the roots of all base ambition, of all earthliness and selfishness ! how it bids us empty ourselves of ourselves if we would be in sympathy with Christ !

Doctrinally, the song of the angels was justified by the fullness of the meaning of the act which they celebrated. The glory of God was illustrated more by the gift of his Son to save the world, in his life, his sufferings, and in his death, than it was in the creation of the material universe, or in the grander act of the creation of man. I grant that the “heavens declare the glory of God ; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.” I grant that we may, from the contemplation of the

physical aspects of nature, get grand and noble conceptions of the Creator. But yet we feel and believe that there is something higher. We look at the outward physical world, and are filled with wonder by its variety and beauty; yet we feel that man's creation was a greater event—one over which “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” We feel this because of the moral and spiritual nature in man—because mere material nature is dull and dead; while, on the other hand, the moral and spiritual nature of man shall survive the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds. So when we examine into the moral and spiritual nature of man we get into a sphere above mere matter—vastly grander and more magnificent.

“The morning stars sang together” at the creation of man. How beautiful the analogy! We are not told the words of their song; but when the angels came to tell the shepherds that, lying in the manger, wrapped in swaddling-bands, they would find the babe who was to be the Saviour of mankind, straightway there came through the air the nobler song of a new creation. How clearly those heralds of glory rang out the purpose of that creation in the anthem, “Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill toward men.”

We find too, in the mediation of Christ, introduced by the babe in the cradle, a greater display of the

wisdom of God, and also of the love and justice of God, than all his creation before had offered. Of wisdom—because Christ himself was “the wisdom of God.” It lay incarnate in the infant in the cradle. Because, also, the Gospel of the Son of God is “the wisdom of God in a mystery.” Of justice—because, whatever our conception of the justice of God as gathered from his strokes upon humanity might be, we can get no conception of it so full and so vivid, as is shown by the gift of his Son to suffer and die that the world might be redeemed through him. Go to the cradle of that babe as he lies in the manger, and as you look down upon his fair face, and upon the beautiful eyes as they open to gaze upon you, anticipate the history of that child—the life of sorrow, the long and weary years of grief and pain. Anticipate the agonies of Calvary and the tortures of the cross ; the apparent wreck of all his aims there when, in his anguish, he cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Anticipate all this, and then say whether the justice of God was not shown far more terribly in this than in any of the severities which history records against humanity. And so of his grace and love, had I the time to dwell upon them ; but I have only mentioned these doctrinal hints to show you the justice of the angels’ song of “Glory to God.”

The next element of the song was “Peace on

earth," and this was to be secured by the coming of the babe, because that babe was to be the Mediator between God and man. Let us go back to the Prophets, and see what they have to say of the coming of the Messiah. Hear Isaiah: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, *that her warfare is accomplished.*" But how? because "*her iniquity is pardoned.*" Here is the root of it all. The long war between God and man is over—the strife between the eternal throne and God's rebellious subjects is ended for evermore; the Prince of Peace has come. And Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, says he came "that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and *preached peace* to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh." And in that wondrous passage describing the character of the child that shall be born—in the ninth chapter of Isaiah—the very last of the great names given to him is "Prince of Peace." The "Prince of Peace," because he is to take upon his own shoulders the strokes due to a condemned and sinning world; the "Prince of Peace," because he is to make an offering of his own blood as a sacrifice through which "God can be just, and yet justify the ungodly;" the "Prince of Peace," because he is to bring peace by burying in his own blessed and

innocent bosom the sword of the divine vengeance forever.

And further, God has offered to mankind, in thus incarnating His own peace—peace to the *individual* soul as the fruit of Christ's mediation : a peace which is perfect and knoweth no fear, because the soul at peace with God has no right, and no necessity, to fear any thing else than the anger of God. As a Christian, you can live always in this atmosphere of peace. What though business be not prosperous? What though you are unsuccessful in the affairs of life? For what is prosperity—what is success? There is no real, permanent, enduring prosperity to any man unless God, through Christ, has given His peace to his soul. So that, going out of this church and believing that that peace of God is in your soul, no strife of the world, no care of business, no sorrows or afflictions will disturb your Christmas joy to-day.

But there is something else implied : not only peace to the individual soul, but peace *between man and man*. Christ is not only the mediator between God and man, but also between man and man. So true is this, that the influence of Christianity in any given age—I mean Christianity as a social power, as an element working among men—may be tested and measured by the peace or wars that prevail in the world in that age. Its bonds are peace ; its fruits are peace ; its attributes are peace ; its joys are joys

of peace ; the Christian home is a home of peace, and the Christian land is a land of peace ; Christianity is all peace ; and when the earth is all Christian, when the last enemy shall have been overthrown, when the last banner of heathendom shall have been torn down and trampled in the dust, then, in all the earth, there shall be no sound of war forever—for men shall have beaten “their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks,” and shall “learn war no more.”

Do not deceive yourselves on this point. I know how the pride of the world treats this question, and how even some Christian philosophers treat it. I know that you may read, in books, of war as the great civilizer, and of its necessity to the culture, and even to the moral development, of the race in its higher and nobler attributes. I grant that war may be a useful *scourge* for a people sunk in luxury and debauchery, and for all others out of whom manliness and virtue are crushed. But so may pestilence, and famine, and all the spectre forms of evil. Shall we pray, therefore, that such evils may be inflicted by our God? No, brethren ; it is not for Christian men to preach the beneficence of war. God in his own way may use his “besom of destruction” and “purge his threshing-floor.” It is the Christian minister’s work to proclaim peace and to glorify it. The King under whose banner we serve

is the Prince of Peace, and we live to illustrate his peace in our lives. Show it forth, then, in your intercourse with all men—show it forth in the family circle, in society, in your political relations. I say this because I believe in my heart, not only from the teachings of the Bible, but also from the largest lessons of life that I have been able to gather from history, that the true progress of Christianity among men, that the true progress of civil and religious liberty in all ages, has been retarded, rather than advanced, by every single effort in which Christians have endeavored to wield the sword aggressively for its advancement. “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal,” though “mighty through God.” The sword of God’s Spirit is the only weapon that is mighty in the destruction of the strongholds of Satan. If any of you, therefore, are in danger of imbibing the idea that Christian principles, theories, or reforms can be advanced by hard blows, remember our Christmas lesson in the song of the angels, “Glory to God in the highest, and *on earth peace*, good-will toward men.”

And we come to this last as the source of all the rest—*God’s good-will to man*. This existed in the beginning, in the depths of his eternity. It was the cause of the creation ; it was the fountain of man’s redemption—that redemption by the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem. “God so loved the world, that

he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

God's good-will to man planned this whole scheme of redemption; God's good-will communicated the power, as well as the wisdom, that carried forth this scheme of redemption; and God's good-will shall be the power to carry it on to the end.

And so God's good-will to man is to be the model of our intercourse with our neighbors, the basis of all our action, the ground of all our feelings. To learn that lesson let us this day go back to the cradle at Bethlehem. A babe is lying there in his humble swathings, and a manger is the home that holds him. But the child that lies there comes to save a ruined world; his voice shall quell the storms of battle that rage between earth and heaven; his voice shall chase back to their native hell all the powers of darkness; and at last that voice shall summon all the sleeping tenants of the grave, and call us to a better and eternal home.

Shall we not, then, to-day join in this angelic song?

"'Tis Heaven's new song of love
That wakes those strains above,
And from the angel lips now bursts again;
It sounds through all the sky,
'Glory to God on high,
Peace on the warring earth, good-will to men!'
For God now dwells with man below,
To cause the guilty soul with seraph's love to glow.

“ My Saviour and my God,
Who on this globe hath trod,
Though million orbs of day for thee are gleaming,
My fettered soul set free,
And teach the minstrelsy,
The rescued sinners’ burning heart beseeching ;
Then will I strike my harp of gold,
And sing thy grace, and love, and power, for years untold ! ”

And shall we not to-day make of ourselves a new dedication? The ecclesiastical year in the early ages of the Church began with Easter ; but in the sixth century its beginning was wisely changed from Easter to Advent. It comes appropriately at this season of the year, at the turn of the winter solstice, when the darkest day has passed, and the days are growing longer, and each day brighter. Shall it not be so with us? Shall not every day be brighter from this time on in our own souls? Shall we not be purer and more devoted and earnest in our lives and in our love for Him who gave himself as a sacrifice for us? So let us abound in acts of faith, trust, love, charity, and tenderness, that these Christmas joys shall be sanctified to every one of us. God grant that the pleasant festivities of to-morrow, and all the happiness of this general period of joy and thankfulness, may be sanctified to you all, old and young alike, and cause you to walk nearer to God, and make your light shine clearer and brighter than ever before!

The contemplation of even the earthly aspect of

Christ's history should impel us to generous and loving deeds. Take care of your poor in this Christmas time. A very little from you will make the home—I don't know it, but you need not to be informed where it is—of some poor creature, some family struggling in poverty, happy with Christmas cheer. Yes, remember the poor; for it was to bless and cheer them that the Babe of Bethlehem came. And then, too, if there are any acts of kindness which you ought to have done during the year toward any member of your family, or to some friend or neighbor, any service which you have neglected or postponed; or if there be any claims upon your charity or generosity which you have failed to meet, do not let this Christmas week pass over without doing all your duty. So will your hearts be lighter, purer, and happier; so will you be worthier to join in the song of the angels, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."

III.

THE MILE-STONES OF LIFE.

Redeeming the Time. Col. iv, 5.

I HAVE no metaphysical definition of time to offer you this morning. It is quite sufficient for the purposes of our text, and of the sermon, to say that the time in which we are concerned is the period of our present life whatever that may be, longer or shorter. "Of all which is necessary to man for the accomplishment of his design," says St. Augustine, "there is nothing which less depends upon himself, nothing which is less at his disposal, than future time. We can found no pretensions upon it ; it is not ours. If there be any folly, therefore, greater than another, it is the folly of wasting the present and trusting in the future." And yet if there be any folly to which mankind are more prone than others it is precisely this. Let us look at the meaning of this text for ourselves, taking it to refer to our personal life and the opportunities which life affords us. Let us ask first, What is meant by redeeming the time ? and then, Why we should redeem the time ; and these two points are those to which I ask your attention.

The simplest answer that can be given to the question, "What is meant by redeeming the time?" is, that we use it as it is given, and for the purposes for which it is given to us. And what is the purpose of our human life? Most of us are unconscious of any purpose, at all events of our own. Be that as it may, the Almighty has purposes, and he has designed that your life shall have a purpose and an aim. I grant, that in a perfectly healthy condition of the moral and physical system it would not be likely that we should be conscious of an individual purpose in the course of our human life; that if our whole being were working normally, according to the original design of God, then, as is the case with every perfectly healthful organization, we should not think of a purpose, or it would be worked out naturally without any special consciousness on our part. A tree, for instance, that grows from the smallest seed, or whatever the seed may be, an acorn or a chestnut, or any other you please, grows up in obedience to the law of its nature without any consciousness. So throughout all nature, and throughout the animate creation, before we come to ourselves as responsible beings we find this law prevailing. It would be the same under a perfectly healthful condition of humanity. The fact that consciousness of weakness, of want, of evil or of good, comes upon us, shows that there is more or less disorder in the organization. Take your own physi-

cal organization as an example. A man is never conscious that he has a heart until there is some disturbance of it ; until, after some undue exertion, he feels a slight palpitation ; but when it becomes more or less disordered the consciousness is ever present, ever painful ; it disappears as the disorder disappears, and returns as it returns, but never passes away entirely.

And now with reference to this sinful organization of ours. We are in a condition to look into our being and find the purpose of it. This is undeniable, for we are rational beings, and know—if we give the subject any consideration at all—that our life is not what God intended it to be, that the purpose of our organization is more or less frustrated, that the faculties we have are not disposed of as God designed them to be. What, then, is the object of our human life as God inscribes it in his word, and writes it upon the functions of our minds and hearts ? I cannot answer it better than in the words of the old Catechism : “That we should glorify God, and enjoy him forever.”

Whatever occupation of our time, then, comes within this definition of the aim of our being is a rightful occupation, and whatever employment of our time may not be embraced in this is a wrong employment of it. Let us examine the occupations of human life. We are at one of the landmarks and eras of time.

The beginning of the New Year ought to be for each of us a time of consideration and thought ; not, in fact, that there is any thing special about the first day of the year, except that it is one of those ordinary landmarks and mile-stones that tell us how much of the journey we have gone over. Alas ! there are no mile-stones for the future, no limit up to which we can say our journey is to go, and where it is to end. Those New Years' days that we look back upon, those white stones, are but sepulchres of the years that are gone ; and the more of them there have been, the fewer there will be. What wealth you have in the shape of time—I do not say you have it at all, for it is God's—but the more you have had you have so much the less to gain.

Let us look to the occupations of our human life with relation to the law of God, and see whither we are tending, where we are, and what hopes we have for the future.

There is a story told of a monk to whom a young man, in whom he was deeply interested, came to talk of the prospects of his life. He was a young man of talent and high aspirations, and desired to indulge them because of his capacity and position in life. He spoke of his present plans.

“And then,” said the old man, “you are to go to the University, are you?”

“Yes.”

“And stay there until you are twenty-five years of age?”

“Yes. And then I shall enter upon the discharge of my public functions, which will enable me to accumulate wealth.”

“What then?”

“Why, then I shall have all that makes life comfortable, and shall be able to enjoy it, perhaps, for many years.”

“*What then?*”

“I shall then be an old gray-haired man, and shall live so many years longer.”

“WHAT THEN?”

And so the confession had to come, that all of these plans and purposes and aims could have but one ending. The priest preached no other sermon to the young man but that single utterance, “What then?” and perhaps it might be enough for you to-day if you should take the thought and bring it home, and let it govern your life for the year. “What then?” All the purposes of life of which that young man was conscious were bounded solely by the horizon of this world; he had not taken into account the greater end and aim, which alone could dignify all these years of labor, and give character to his pursuits and ennoble them. Let us see, then, that we be wiser.

Our occupations in this life are definitely fixed for us to a certain extent by the very necessities of life.

We are put here to live a certain term of years, and God permits us to live as long as our organization is capable of existing. We must have our food and clothing and shelter ; we must have the graces and arts of life necessary for the cultivation of our minds, the enlargement of our sphere of thinking, and the purification of our sensibilities. This necessity is fixed upon us, and it is our duty to attend to our personal culture and *education*, and fit ourselves for the practical line of life that opens before us. We are to discharge the ordinary duties of life, and, more than this, to attend to our personal culture merely for the purposes of culture, because God has given us minds designed for culture, and they never meet the end for which God intended them unless we do our best for them.

When we have attained a proper degree of education for *business*, professional or otherwise, it is our duty to use the time necessary for the discharge of that duty ; to redeem the time properly, will be to use whatever time is necessary for the discharge of our daily duties in life. You know that limit very well. You may fall behind it, and then you are ignorant ; you may go beyond it, and then you are grasping ; your own experience has taught you what you ought to do, and what you cannot do.

There are claims of *society*, and these are not to be trenched upon by any other. Some men for the sake

of their own personal culture neglect society altogether. Some men are so given up to business and trade that they neglect society altogether. And yet this neglect reacts upon those who are guilty of it. A man never voluntarily withdraws himself from the ordinary duties he owes to neighbors and friends except at his own peril. He finds that those whom he neglects neglect him, and are willing to neglect him. It becomes part of our duty to take care of the social interests of our family, and our own individual relations to society, and see that they do not suffer. We ought to keep our friendships in repair, as Johnson has beautifully expressed it, by cultivating old friends, and forming new ones whenever we can. How we ourselves suffer for allowing the old warm affections of our boyhood to be cooled and chilled, and finally put out, by the business interests and ambition of life! And then how we suffer if we make no new friends—going on to be old, and finding ourselves alone! How much better, and happier, and more beautiful, to make some new friends every year among the young, and get some young hearts twined about ours that shall, by and by, support us when we grow old and need the support of kindness and love!

There are *recreations* that take of necessity a portion of our time. I say recreation, and say it of set purpose. One of the things which we need to learn

is the distinction between recreation and amusement. The mass of people use the words as if they were entirely synonymous ; but if we examine their meaning we shall find that they are two different things. The time spent in recreation is time wisely spent, according to a law of our nature. It is utterly impossible to keep the bow always bent without breaking, or to keep the human mind in that full tension of study continually without injuring the mind itself.* We need and must have recreation of some sort. What is the distinction between recreation and amusement? Recreation is change of employment, that is all. It is a very beautiful law of our nature that it is so ; that the mind rests and recovers its energies for new toil by the mere change of employment. I do not speak of the recreation of sleep and forgetfulness, which is purely physical, but of those recreations in which the mind is interested. The recreation of society, of conversation—that is not indolence ; but though the mind acts, it is acting in quite a different way from the duties of study or business. We become refreshed unconsciously. And so with the recreation of travel and sight-seeing, and that which we enjoy in the study of the arts : the mind rests in the study of these things, though at the same time we may make a labor of them. Amusements are something which are entirely exterior to the mind itself, external spectacles ; stimu-

lants, properly so called. Take the theatre, to which many go for what they call recreation : they go there really for amusement—that their minds may be entirely dissipated ; or, if they have got past that—for the illusion of the theatre is very trifling, and soon passes away for those used to it—they go there in order that some new spectacle may rouse their minds, and stimulate their passions to an unwonted activity. What is the theatre at best, as at present existing, but a stage on which are exhibited human passions, and exhibited so as to stimulate the passions of the spectators ? You would not go yourselves into your neighbor's house to see the spectacle of jealousy exhibited, or go to the other side of the way to see envy or hatred exhibited ; you would not go there that yourselves and your children could see the show. You might thus, if you chose, see acted the whole catalogue of deadly sins. You will find them, one in this house, another in that, and yet you do not run to see them ; but you would rather shun them, and beg your children to shun them. And yet the theater is a gathering together of these into one focus—jealousy, revenge, envy, lust, violence, wrong—not in separate households, but all embodied at once, and some of us look, and take our children to look, and call that recreation ! And so I might go through a number of what are called recreations of society, but I prefer leaving

them to your own thoughts. You can amuse your children at home by giving them suitable recreation. It is your duty to make your own house the one of all others in which they shall most delight to be ; but if you take your children to the theatre or the opera, for their amusement, in their childhood, you are fostering a taste for high stimulants, and destroying that great source of happiness—satisfaction with pure and simple pleasures. Begin by taking children to the opera at the age of thirteen or fifteen, and you destroy this possibility. They cannot be satisfied with simple pleasures afterward. I am speaking simply the sober truth, and leave it to wise men to judge of what I say.

We find the ordinary occupations of life applying only to the outward environment of life, while these outward manifestations are, after all, so to speak, only life's scaffolding. Does it not seem strange, then, that a man should toil from morning till night only to find a house to cover himself and children, and procure food and raiment for them ? And yet it is the law of God that it should be so for the mass of mankind. This very labor itself is God's blessing. These employments are intended to train us to discipline our minds and habits, and fix us in steadfast ways. We are getting discipline in the performance of these duties in the counting-house, in the kitchen, in the household, in the shop, or on

the farm. These duties are not inconsistent with spiritual interests, or even unfavorable to them, because God means that a large part of our time should be so employed.

Let us turn, secondly, to the inner life—the edifice of which all this outward show is but the scaffolding. We are to “redeem the time” for repentance and faith, for holy living, for acts of charity, for advancing the kingdom of Christ in the earth; time for repentance toward God, and for faith toward our Lord Jesus. This is the first step in this inner life. Have you taken that step, my friend? O, it may be that you have not found the time for this! You find time for study, for employment, for idleness, for recreation, for the counting-room, the theatre, the ball-room, any thing, every thing, but have never found time yet for this! And now, to-day, I come, with as earnest a heart and as earnest a voice as God gives me, to bring to you, and say, “Redeem the time.” This is the new year’s bidding to you, that you redeem the time. Repent of your sins, and believe in the Lord Jesus!

And, then, “Redeem the time” for the continuance of this godly life, for holy living, for acts of charity, for public-spirited benevolence, for enlarging the kingdom of God by all the means in our power. Are you too busy for this? If so, you have taken so strong a view of that part of our duty which lies in

the outward environment that you have forgotten the other. "O, but I am so full of business and care! I find time for these things, but I must do my benevolence by proxy." You may be very poor, and, if so, I would not say a word that could touch such a position as yours, or hurt it; you may have to be occupied from the early dawn until late at night in getting the means of living; if this be so, I only wish this New Year's morning God may bless you, and that the time may soon come when it may not be necessary for you to be digging and delving every hour. God never meant us to be such machines as that. It may be that you have passed beyond this, and have gained a comfortable position in life. And you may say, "My business engrosses me so that I cannot find time." You find time for recreation; take care that you do not redeem your time thus, only for the devil! that you do not occupy your time thus, to find at last that you missed the whole aim of life. Any man may get rich that will set about it; if he will stint himself and his family in all the comforts of life, and spend every hour digging, digging, grubbing, grubbing, with his head downward, he may get rich—and "What then?" It may be that you have given too much of your time to your studies—as if all virtue and godliness consisted in the student's occupation! in that which, after all, is purely personal to yourself; which may

be corroding your moral nature and eating out the image of God !

For the enlargement of Christ's kingdom we must "redeem the time." If I come to you to ask for a charity in your places of business, perhaps I ought not to expect much of your time, because your places of business are to be devoted to business ; but if I come to your private house to ask for a charity, and spread before you some plan for enlarging Christ's kingdom, or diffusing his truth, or improving the condition of the poor, is it always the case that you are willing even then to listen, to give attention to the subject, and occupy your mind with it ? No, not always ; not often. There are some who have got this into their minds—that they are to live to do good and glorify God ; but most of us do nothing more than what we are pinned down to, and cannot escape from. Let us begin this new year by taking a nobler view of our own individual destiny—that we are put here by God to be agents for the extension of God's kingdom, and let us endeavor, now at least, if we have never done it before, to do our whole duty. Study the work God has put upon you, men of New York ! In this city, from which go forth streams of thought, and sentiment, and feeling that regulate the moral growth of this whole land ; in this city you are set as lights — let your light shine !

What a year this last has been for openings for the spread of the kingdom of God ! The world has all changed since five or ten years ago. There is work for us to diffuse God's kingdom throughout the earth, more than enough. Who ever dreamed of the openings that the great East to-day affords for the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ ? Those miserable wars in India, what has come of them ? The Gospel will have freer course in India than ever it had before. That miserable opium war in China, what results has it borne ? This one thing Divine Providence has adduced as good out of the evil, that China will be open to the preaching of the Gospel as it never was before. The expressions of fancy that had gone out about Japan, as a land of perpetual beauty and golden affluence—all this was fanciful ; and we learn that it is a plain, simple land like our own, but rich in grains and natural productions, and that we can go to Japan soon and preach the Gospel without let or hindrance. Here are fields which cannot be neglected.

We must not suffer our time to be taken up with idle dreams, or in mere worldly pleasure. We must be earnest in our work. The history of the world shows that energetic vice is stronger than indolent virtue ; that the man who is the strongest is master of the rest, whether he be a good or a bad man ; that industry commands success. What is history itself,

warp and woof, but the actions of the busiest leaders of the race? Indolence has no place in creation. There is no place for a lazy man in the plan of God's government; he is a blot upon creation. Worthless to himself, and worthless to his fellows, he had better pass away, and hide himself from the sight of men. Young people, if you feel the spirit of indolence at any time, remember that these golden moments of youth are to be employed in personal culture, and in getting the means of doing good.

I spoke a little while ago of getting time for recreation. We must not let this go too far. The disposition to find pleasure every-where is the mark of a feeble intellect and of a low grade of moral power. If there be one reason more than another why the tyrants of Europe keep down the masses, it is that the masses are trained to habits of extravagant and undue recreation and amusement. People who want to be in a beer garden or a flower garden one half or one third of every day are not fit to be free. As we allow a love of pleasure to encroach upon the industrious occupations of life or the duties we owe to God, we are losing the freedom and power that belong to us as Christians. If there be a man of pleasure here to-day, properly so called, I would say to him, God Almighty has not sent you into this world to merely play the fool and enjoy yourself! Indeed, it matters very little to mankind or to God whether

you enjoy yourself or not. The object of your life is to glorify God and enjoy him forever !

And now, Why should we redeem the time ? The answer to this has been already, to a certain extent, given in unfolding the duty of redeeming the time ; but I may put it specifically in one or two points that may arrest your attention for the coming year.

One of the points is, that time is the seed-time for eternity. Many figures are used in the word of God to illustrate our life, but none more frequently than this. Every act is a seed. “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” And, as to us, we are sowing all the time ; our hands are ever full of seeds, and every movement we make scatters them, and they take root. We are sowing, it may be, good seed that shall spring up to everlasting life, or it may be tares, or poisonous seeds, that shall grow up hereafter to destroy us. My friends, there are acts of yours in days and years gone by that perhaps you have forgotten ; many of them you try to forget ; but they are not forgotten in the great harvest-field of God — they were seeds, they have sprung up, and shall one day confront you ! Every hour of your time, every moment, has been such a seed as this. You have sown it and forgotten it, but it is recorded on high, and you shall one day answer for it.

Your present life is the seed-time of eternity : that is to say, you are all immortal beings—you cannot

divest yourselves of this attribute which God has given you to make you like himself; you cannot, if you would, divest yourselves of it. You may "shuffle off this mortal coil" by suicide, you may put an end to this outward physical life, but you cannot commit suicide of the soul, so as to put an end to it. You may destroy all that makes it worth having, all its possibilities of bliss, but you cannot put an end to it. You will live forever in spite of yourself! So if the seed you are sowing be good seed it will spring up in everlasting life, and you shall enjoy it to all eternity; but if the seed be bad—the black seed of damnation—it will come up again hereafter, and you shall suffer for it forever and forever. Then let us use our time well, let us redeem this seed-time that God has given us, so that we may be laying up a harvest of everlasting joy.

And further, because it is the only seed-time. "I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." We must work the works of Him that sent us while it is yet day, and yet we allow one day to pass after another; we form other plans and purposes which we intend to carry out, regardless of the one grand purpose of our lives. "It shall be to-morrow, next year, when I get a little older, when I have accomplished this, that, and the other. Remember, "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might,

for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge in the grave whither thou goest." There is no purgatory in which you can pluck up these plants from the old seed. It is a fiction devised to quiet the consciences of those who have wasted their years and misspent their time. You have no warrant for this fiction in the Scriptures. Their whole lesson is that a man's life is as one seed-time, that whatsoever seed he sows that shall he reap. As the tree falls, so it must lie. Our doom is fixed at death. If we repent not before our years are spent, in truth we shall never repent at all ; if we are not saved in this world, we shall never be ; if we do not make use of this time of probation, God's mercy will never, never reach us again !

We should redeem the time because we know not how little of it we may have to redeem. The past, the present, and the future, that is all we can say about it. We must divide it into these three, and there is nothing else. The past, what is it ? It is gone, and will never be back again. You have no control over it, none whatever. And the future, what do you know of that ? It is not, and may never be, for you ; you have no control of that. What is left ? The present. It is gone as I have uttered it ; it is gone, gone with the breath of my mouth. Brethren, we have only a second at a time. Ah, this infinitely precious time, which God gives us, he gives

it thus as a magic diamond, glittering, shining, and sparkling for the moment, and then gone for evermore. Precious as it is, it is gone, and we cannot hold it. We can only hold it by giving it to God! If we do not do this the sparkling gem is dust—it is worse than dust. It is laid up against us to condemn us hereafter for the waste of it.

I do not know any thing finer in the Old Testament than the story told of David when he was in the cave of Adullam, when the Philistines were encamped at Rephaim, and at the end of the plain. David had nothing to drink for twenty-four hours, and as he lay panting in the cave, with his men of arms about him, he said, “O that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem that is at the gate!” It was an ejaculation which fierce thirst wrung from him. There were three brave men who at once determined to gratify his wish, and they went over the plain, where the arrows were raining down upon them; but through the midst of these hurtling arrows and flying javelins they went to the well of Bethlehem and got the water, and brought a gourd full of it to the king to slake his thirst. I know nothing richer or grander in the Old Testament, nor in the history of man, than David’s conduct then. He would not drink of it, but poured it out as a libation to the Lord; and why? “My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing: shall I drink

the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it!" Do you see the application I would make of this? Every hour of your human life and mine, every drop of this precious time, which God gives us in drops, was purchased with a dearer blood and more fearful peril of sacrifice than this. It was not merely through the arrows hurled from the towers of Bethlehem, it was not merely breasting the javelins of the Philistines, that Christ our Saviour purchased for us the gift of this precious time allowed to us in life. O no! He received into his divine breast all the arrows of hell, he poured out his most precious blood in sorrow and agony, to buy this time for you and me. Shall we drink up these hours that Christ has purchased, and waste them as they come? O no! Say rather, I will pour them out to the Lord, I will glorify Him with this time that He has purchased for me.

To you who are members of the Christian Church may this be a year in which you will exhibit more practical personal religion, and labor more zealously for the enlargement of the Church and the development of Christ's kingdom, than ever you did before! Take larger and nobler views of your duty to your family, to your neighbors, to your Church, to your God! To those who are sinners I say, Repent now. Do not say, I will repent, but, I do repent. You do

not know how much time you may have to spend ; you do not know even that you will live to pass out of that door. Do not say I will believe, but I believe now. Give your heart to God, and resolve that hereafter you will endeavor to be a Christian. Be a Christian this morning, by humbly submitting yourself before God.

I give to this congregation the New Year's wish, the most beautiful a Pastor could wish to his people—that which Aaron, at the command of God, gave to Israel — that God's blessing may rest upon you : “The Lord bless thee, and keep thee : the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee : the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.”

IV.

THE WAY TO FORGIVENESS.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.—I *John i, 9.*

IN every system of morals, Pagan or Christian, the duty of self-scrutiny has been acknowledged. "Know thyself" was said to have been the inscription on the temple of Apollo, and the inscription was declared to have come down from on high.* In the Christian scheme of morality this duty is enjoined with a stricter earnestness, because it is apter to the whole Christian idea of the relation between God and man than it could have been to the Pagan idea. The duty of confessing our sins is enjoined in the Christian system, and by the Christian Scriptures, strictly and repeatedly. In fact, there is very little disposition to question that this is a duty, and men in general are so ready to acknowledge it that it has been made the basis of many an imposture and many a corruption in the Christian system. There was a time when throughout the whole of Christendom the confession

* "A precept," says Cicero, "of so much force and wisdom that we dare not ascribe it to any man, but to the oracle of God alone."

of sins to God, and God alone, was the general practice ; but the Church of Rome has by degrees—for the doctrine and practice of auricular confession came up by degrees—formed out of this simple duty (taking this text as one of the strong foundations of the doctrine and the precept) that system of auricular confession, of confession to a priest at set times—the confession of all sins, venial or mortal, no matter of what class, no matter against whom, or when, or how committed—has formed, out of this plain duty of confessing to Almighty God the sins we have committed against Him, that scheme which inevitably binds the minds of the laity in a chain of bondage of which none but the priest has the key. No such tyranny as this is contemplated in our text, or inculcated anywhere else in the Bible ; nowhere in the New Testament is it made the duty of the priest to be the mediator between God and man. There is but one mediator between God and man according to the Christian system, the man Christ Jesus. The Christian minister is a teacher of Christian people it is true ; but a priest he is not, and never can be. This is the great distinction between the Pagan and the Christian systems ; the distinction between mediator and teacher. There was no such thing as a moral teacher among the Pagan priests. The priest sacrificed, and led the people in those oblations which they made with the intention of conciliating their

angry gods, whom they believed to be vengeful, and passionate and unjust ; sacrificing the victim at the altar, and standing in the place of the people as a mediator, but never teaching. No priest of Jupiter ever preached a sermon. On the other hand the Christian scheme has its ministers, it is true, but these ministers are never priests ; they make no sacrifices, they offer none, for they know that there remains now no more sacrifice for sin ; that Jesus Christ made an end of the system of sacrifices so far as sacrifices can be vicarious or propitiatory. Not only do there remain no more sacrifices for sin, but there is now only a fearful looking forward for a judgment that is to come. The duty of the Christian minister is to lead his people, to teach them the news of Christ's Gospel, and present them ever with things new and old by way of warning, encouragement, or reproof ; but never by way of mediation, never putting himself between his people and God, to take the place of the Lord Jesus, the only mediator between man and God. Our text implies and teaches the doctrine of confession to God alone. It is before Him that our knees are to be bent, never to a mortal man, never by way of confessing sin to a fellow-being presumed to be holier—humbling the intellect and the heart—never ! never ! Before God we are all equal, whether learned in God's law or otherwise ; before Him we are all sinners, and all

alike bound to come to Him, humbly and meekly confessing our sins.

The duty of confession to God, and not to man, we find illustrated, in words, examples, and results, in numerous instances in both the Old Testament and the New. The book of Psalms alone, with its many fitting echoes and responses to all our human feelings, contains a good number of these passages. In the Fifty-first Psalm, "I acknowledged my transgressions : and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned." No confession to God's priest even then, when priests offered sacrifices daily for the sins of the people ; his confession is to God : "Against thee only have I sinned." Stronger still in the Thirty-second Psalm, "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord ; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." And so, if we pass from the Psalmist to his wiser son, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

The depth of the feeling with which we should confess our sins, the sense of wrong and guilt that should be upon us, we also find illustrated in the Psalms and Proverbs. "Innumerable evils have encompassed me," says the Psalmist ; "mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to

look up ; they are more than the hairs of my head." And still later does Job after his affliction, when he had been brought to a thorough self-scrutiny, say, "Behold, I am vile. What shall I answer thee ? I will lay my hand upon my mouth." And that Psalm, the *De Profundis*, which has been in all the ages of the Church the oracle of all that are sorrowing under pain and sin because of transgression, is an example of the true character of confession, containing the consciousness of guilt and a desire for its removal, the consciousness of sin and a determination to avoid it. A finer example of the acknowledgment of guilt with humility cannot be found than that in Daniel, where, after his trial, he brings himself down before God, and says, "And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments ; we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and thy judgments ; neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face." When we come to God confessing our sins, we are not to feel a sense of our sins only, but feel also,

humbled on account of them ; putting our mouths in the dust, in the language of Job, before the great and terrible God we have offended.

The next point is the purpose of amendment. The confession of our sins being comprehensive and complete, and made in deep humiliation, should also be made with the purpose of amendment. Augustine speaks of a covetous man confessing his covetousness, and almost in the same breath his mind is far off forging and devising some new plan of enriching himself. Many of our confessions, it is to be feared, are of this sort. We come, intending to be sure to confess our sins, because that, we know, is the condition of pardon, but not with the purpose of amendment so clear and strong that it shall work itself out in final results. We often come confessing our offenses and, at the same time, thinking over the sin as a delicious thing, and waiting for the very next chance of repeating it. If our confession of sin be not accompanied with a genuine purpose of amendment and a hatred of sin, the confession might as well not be made. God does not demand, and will not receive, this lip confession. Joel told the Jews after their long transgressions, "Rend your heart, and not your garments ; and turn unto the Lord" "with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning." It should be accompanied with prayer if it is to be such a confession as

the text speaks of and the Scriptures everywhere enjoin. Two men came to pray, as we are told in the beautiful Gospel of St. Luke, and one of them, a man that, doubtless, had had a high place in the synagogue from his youth up, trained in all the peculiar learning of his class, a Pharisee, stood up before God, and thanked God that he was "not as other men are." The sacred record tells us that there was a publican that stood afar off, and all we know of his confession and prayer is, "God be merciful to me a sinner." That was the confession that he was a sinner, and the prayer accompanied it, "God be merciful to me." And the Scriptures tell us that that man went down to his house justified more than the other.

We now come to consider the blessing promised to those who confess their transgressions. The first promise is that of forgiveness. Sin exists in us as guilt to be pardoned, and when we come to confess we feel this guilt, and pray that it may be removed. "God be merciful to me a sinner." And this pardon of sin is called justification. I shall not dwell upon the nature of justification; it is the substance of the first four or five chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, which teach this doctrine, and show its nature and conditions. The whole of these four chapters are taken up with this one demonstration, that it is possible for a man to have his sins forgiven; and everywhere throughout the Bible the aim of

the teaching is that man may be forgiven. In the forms and ceremonies of the law, in the sacrifices described in the book of Leviticus, when a man committed a sin he should bring his lamb to the temple, or if he were poor, then his pigeons ; according to his purse, his offering. In the law, and ceremonies of the law, we find everywhere the same end sought for—the forgiveness of sins ; and when we come to God confessing, our constant prayer is, “ Forgive us our sins.” Christ puts this petition to our lips in the comprehensive prayer in which he gives the form of all our prayers, “ Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.” Whoever comes confessing his sins, and forsaking them, shall find mercy. This mercy is forgiveness of sins. By confession the relation between the sinful man and God is altered, and now God’s anger is turned away. Before there was—in the great book of doom, which God keeps for all classes, conditions, and generations of mankind, and has kept from the beginning of the world until now—a catalogue of the sins committed against Almighty God ; but these are now wiped out by forgiveness, and the relation between the sinner and God is changed from enmity to peace. Do you mean to say, it may be asked, that this is always possible, that every one who goes to God with the confession of sin upon his lips shall have his sins forgiven ? Unquestionably ; there is no possibility

of failure. There never has been a case from the beginning of Christianity until now, never a single case of an earnest, truthful sinner confessing his sins before Almighty God, with repentance and turning to Him, that was not followed by forgiveness. I say this in the strongest possible manner. It is the test of Christianity, because this is what it aims at, the very thing that Christ was given for, that our sins might be forgiven ; for this he hung upon the tree ; for this all that grand plan of redemption, which makes so large a portion of the picture of Christianity, was devised in the eternity of almighty wisdom , for this all Christ's sufferings were endured—that we might be forgiven. If Christianity fail in this it fails utterly in the very crisis of its trial. What good is it to us if it cannot give us this ? We are sinners and want to be saved ; and if we cannot have forgiveness in the Christian way—by confession, and repentance, and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ—let us turn back again to that old religion by which many Pagans found comfort in bringing their sacrifices to the temple, or let us abandon all thought of religion, and say to our souls, “ Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” It is not so. Christianity is not a failure. The poor, sin-sick soul is forgiven, shall be forgiven to the end of time. There came one to me this week with such words as these : “ I have sinned too much. I have been a child of God,

but have wandered far away from him for years and years. I have left and forgotten him. I come with sorrow, but I fear there is no forgiveness for me." Ah, here is the place of the Christian minister, not to receive the confession, and be the medium of absolution, but to tell such souls as that—whether you be sinners that never sought God's mercy at all, or, like this one, are backsliders, who have been living for years with the dogs and sorcerers of the earth, and, like the prodigal son, turn away from the husks, and long for your father's house—confess your sins before Almighty God, and you shall be forgiven.

And so, again, the text promises not only forgiveness, but cleansing from all unrighteousness. Sin exists in us not only as guilt to be pardoned, but also as unholiness to be removed. If we confess our sins before Almighty God not only shall we be forgiven, but the disposition to sin shall be removed. Sanctification is promised to us as well as justification. We shall be cleansed ; not cleansed partially, not from this, that, or the other evil tendency, but cleansed from all unrighteousness. If there be any text in the whole Bible that declares the doctrine of Christian purity this does it. God will cleanse us from all unrighteousness. It may be asked, "Do you mean to say that you believe in the doctrine of the perfectibility of human nature?" I do not believe in any such doctrine ; and this is the way many

people object to the doctrine of sanctification and Christian perfection as it is taught in the Church. There has been this mystic dream of perfectibility prevailing among a certain class of men, in Pagan and Christian times, in all ages ; but that is a very different thing from the Christian doctrine of sanctification. This does not imply that human nature is or can be perfect. It simply implies this, that the work of salvation, which Christianity proposes to accomplish, may be a complete one ; that if Christ Jesus died to take away our sins, the effect of his death may be the taking away of the sins of the individual ; that the whole effect of Christ's redemption can never be wrought out until this is wrought out—the entire diffusion of holiness among men. Sanctification is the moral aspect of Christianity ; and so far forth as we set up ideas of the possibilities of Christianity, we are sure ourselves to fall in with the standard we have set up ; and if we have, by any accident or mode of thinking, come to the conclusion that, after all, if we only do tolerably well in life, and only accomplish the ends of life fairly, there is nothing to fear, we have forgotten the model of life set before us in the New Testament. The Lord Jesus is our model, and we are told to imitate him ; nay, more, in our text the injunction is put in language so broad and strong that one shrinks from the thought of its being an injunction. We are

told by Christ himself, "Be ye perfect." How? As John the Baptist was perfect? No. As the Apostle John was perfect? No such comparison as that. As Jesus Christ, the God-man, was perfect? Not even that; but still stronger. "Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Do not lower the Christian ideal; but, for your own sake, keep it up as high as you can. However you have fallen below it in your own case, or however you may see those around fall below it, keep that pure. Though your conduct soil your hands, keep your thought pure—the image of a pure Christian life, and pray to God that you may come near to that ideal. Come, confessing your sins humbly, and you will find that when you seek him he will be found of you, and cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

Lastly, we come to the pledge that the promises shall be fulfilled. This pledge is the faithfulness and justice of God, and that is a security that cannot fail. Heaven and earth may pass away, but God's word shall not pass away. In the chapter which I read in the lesson of this morning it is said, "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we say that we have not sinned we make God a liar." That is one way to make God a liar; we can make God a liar in another way, by distrusting his willingness to perform his own prom-

ises. If we say he will not cleanse us from all unrighteousness we make him a liar in the one case as much as in the other, because his faithfulness has been pledged, his justice has been pledged. His justice, say you? this can have nothing to do with forgiveness and cleansing; justice is to pursue us and take vengeance upon our transgression. Yet the justice of God is pledged for the forgiveness of the sinner. "He is faithful *and just* to forgive us our sins." Some theologians hold to the idea, that because God's grace is exercised in forgiving us there is no justice; when the great tragedy of Calvary itself was only an exhibition of divine justice, and Jesus hung on the cross, an example of God's justice greater even than the everlasting hell prepared for the punishment of the ungodly; for there on him was wreaked all the divine justice, on him were heaped all the sins of all mankind! The great sea, wave after wave, of man's iniquity poured upon him, overwhelming him, and all this to illustrate the justice of God—and this justice of God exhibited on Calvary is pledged to save the world.

John says in this very chapter, the seventh verse, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." God is pledged by the death of his Son, by every tear of anguish which he shed, by all the bloody

sweat that flowed from him in the hour of his agony, by that bitter hour when he was forsaken on the cross, and cried out "it is finished," and gave up the Ghost, by all that Christ endured to atone for the sins of men, God's justice is pledged for your salvation and mine! He has even sworn that he will be merciful, as we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast."

And now, brethren, here is a pledge: God is faithful and just, and forgives us our sins, and cleanses us from all unrighteousness; pledged by His own character; pledged by the offering of His Son on Calvary; pledged by His oath. Oh, the glory of those blessings! Oh, the sanctity of this pledge! Oh, the simplicity of the condition on which it is offered! The blessings are pardon and sanctification; the pledge is the faithfulness and justice of God; the condition, the simple condition of confession and repentance. How simple, yet how comprehensive, is this great scheme. How is it with you, Christian man, in your Christian life? Have you made ad-

vancement? have you come near to that degree of Christian experience in which you can speak of being free from sin? do you walk in the fellowship of Jesus Christ, whose blood has made you free from sin? do you feel that you have been cleansed from all unrighteousness? No, you answer. Some of you may answer differently, but most of you will answer, I have not come to that point of Christian experience. Have you sinned since your conversion? Unquestionably I have, and I am sinning all the time. Is it best to keep on in this way? is this the true way of the Christian life? Have you never thought, "if this be the whole of it, for me, at least, there has been a great deal of failure in it?" There are two feelings dispiriting you—that you are still sinful, that you are still unholy—the one and the other alike putting aside as impossible the higher side of Christian life. Look up! It is a great thing for you that your sins have been forgiven, and that you have been kept in the Christian way of life; that you have shrunk from sin, and, when you did sin, asked for forgiveness. Yet look to it that you fall not again. Sin and confession, alternating, form a wheel, upon which some sinners are circled and turned about until they fall to the ground!

"That we walk in the light," says the context, "as He is the light." The more you walk in the light, the more you will be likely to see your sins and con-

fess them ; the more you walk in the twilight, the more dim and distant will they seem. One of the old fathers says we are very apt, in looking on our own sins, to look through painted glass, painted by the spirit of this world, and through that medium we see all our sins in some strange light, that takes away their hideousness and filthiness. But, in looking at the faults of others we generally use pure white glass, or even magnifying glass. Having confessed your own sins, you fall into this fault of looking into other people's sins. Some people are so pious that they have nothing to do but mind their neighbors' vices and follies. You will never atone for your own covetousness by talking of your neighbors' pride. You say you are a poor man, you cannot associate with such and such people, they are too proud. How do you know about their being proud ? Is it because they live better than you do ? Then, for the same reason, you must yourself be proud, for there is many a dweller in the Five Points that has just as much right to lay at your door the same accusation. If you are a rich man, you cannot cover up your own pride and say, " He is ungrateful ; I helped him this way and that, and he is ungrateful." Let other people's sins alone.

Come nearer to the text, and take it in all its bearings. Confess all your sins ; confess, most of all, that you had so little heart for God, and had

the world so much at heart, and its interests of getting and spending. Confess your sins earnestly, faithfully, before Him, relying on his never-broken pledge, remembering that His oath is registered that you shall be forgiven, and cleansed from all unrighteousness.

V.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE A GROWTH.

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—2 *Peter iii, 18.*

THIS text sets forth the Christian life under the elements of the grace of Christ and the knowledge of Christ. It sets forth, also, the law of the development of the Christian life: that it is the law of growth; that we are to grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To these two points, and to the practical application of them, in ascertaining the tests of Christian growth, I shall invite your attention to-day.

The first point, then, is the view of the Christian life that is here presented under the two elements of the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. One of these is Christ's work of love in us, and the fruits which it produces; that is, the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The other is the answer of our intellectual and moral nature to this gift on the part of Christ, our devotion to him in mind, in heart, and in feelings; for all this is included in the term "the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The word "grace" is used one hundred and twenty-eight times in the Bible, and one hundred and fifteen times in the sense of the favor of God. In the other passages, it is used to denote something growing out of the favor or kindness of God ; and this idea is at the root of the notion of grace in all these remaining places. We speak of a state of grace, and we have authority for this in this text and in the apostolic benediction, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," and by that we mean that a person is in the favor of God in virtue of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the possession of those personal and individual virtues that are essential in order to gain the favor of God. So that to be in a state of grace implies such a relation to the Lord Jesus as to have partaken of the benefits of his death and resurrection, to be living before him in a state of justification and enjoying his favor. It is not necessary, then, to dwell more particularly upon this. The gift of Christ's grace to us is the gift of his life for our example, his death for our redemption, his resurrection for our justification, his spirit for our sanctification ; and, to be in a state of grace, is to have appropriated these blessings to ourselves, continuing that act of appropriation in such a way as to be in living connection with the Lord Jesus as our Redeemer and Saviour.

A mere outward knowledge of Christianity is, in

itself, an invaluable thing. Sometimes we talk in a way as if it were not ; but, although we may speak of an outward and intellectual knowledge as being of itself a thing that cannot save a man, it is invaluable in relation to our personal culture, and the building up of that higher life of which it is but the scaffolding. It is in this outward knowledge that a Christian land differs from a Pagan land, in having the knowledge of Christ diffused through it, and its atmosphere permeated by it. And so, in fact, when we come to speak of that last grand day when God shall reign upon the earth, that day which we sometimes call the day of millennial glory—that day which shall be the final civilization of all mankind is spoken of as the day when knowledge shall be increased, when no man shall ask his fellow, “Knowest thou the Lord?” but all shall know him, from the lowest to the greatest. It is, therefore, a great thing to know the Lord Jesus Christ even in an outward way. It is but the scaffolding by which we erect a Christian life, the shell by which it is preserved ; but, at the same time, without the shell we could not preserve the kernel, without the scaffolding we could never erect the building, without the atmosphere we could not breathe. And so let us bless God that we have had our birth and education in an enlightened and Christian land ; that from our infancy we have been learning those words which are the vehicles

of Christian instruction, those songs which are the breathings of the soul's aspiration to a knowledge and a hope of a higher sphere; that we have this blessed Book, which contains in itself the elements of all knowledge in this life, and all knowledge of the life to come.

The knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and his grace are closely allied. In his Second Epistle Peter says, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you." How? "Through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." Here, then, this very Apostle, from whose words I am preaching to you this morning, sets forth the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ as the means of grace; the very means of preserving and growing in that state of grace. I will quote one or two pregnant passages, of the dozens of similar ones scattered throughout the Scriptures, bearing upon this point of knowledge in relation to virtue and godliness. What is it that Paul tells us in the beautiful Epistle to the Philip-pians, in which he unfolds his inner life so entirely and tenderly to those who were the best of all the Christians to whom he ever wrote, and to whom he most freely poured out his experience—what was his longing and prayer? "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss—" but what? A bright state of religious experience? He means that. A near and close relationship to God? He means that

too. A sure hope of immortality and eternal joy? He means that. "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." And now follow me a little further, and see how he develops the excellency of this knowledge, and what he makes of it. "That I may know him"—that is, the foundation and beginning upon which all our knowledge must rest—"and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering, being made conformable unto his death." Here, then, we have the elements of this true Christian knowledge. "Know that this is life eternal, the knowledge of the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent," to have our souls penetrated through and through with that beautiful life of his, which is set forth for us as a model for our own human life in its very best development; for what can we aim at in this life, in the very highest degree of Christian experience, but that our lives should be a copy of his? In him, in his example, and in the power of his resurrection, to get that which his resurrection purchased for us—our individual justification, and freedom from the power of death and its dominion—our individual title to rise again, we have an assurance that we are in Christ, and with him we shall live; that, like his dead body, we too shall rise again, and that for us there is an assurance of everlasting life hereafter. All this is implied in the knowledge of Christ

and the power of his resurrection. Oh, brethren, to get a knowledge of Christ, which shall be every day a stepping-stone to some new degree of Christian experience, we must live in the shadow of his grace, contemplate his suffering until we are indeed in fellowship with him, dwell upon his agony tenderly and lovingly, sympathizingly and earnestly, until we take them into our habit of thinking and feeling, and are ready to imitate his death and suffering if need be. Oh this fellowship in the suffering of Christ, how much is implied in it! And until we get all this we have no true and intimate knowledge of Christ at all. And when we do get it, we should be free from all self-indulgence, all the common ideas of life as founded upon personal and individual aggrandizement.

The whole of it is summed up in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians by St. Paul in these words: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set

him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." The knowledge of Christ, then, is to know "the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe." Who is there among us that knows this power, that has ever felt it? Sometimes, when we have thrown our hearts out and up to God with a thorough, vital, and absolute faith in Christ, in a single instant of our entire being we may have felt it. Glimpses we may have had of the celestial glory, of the momentary manifestation of that electric fire and power which he can shed to us-ward when we believe. But who dwells constantly in the knowledge of that power? Brethren, we have only dreamed of it now and then; perhaps we have felt a single touch of it, and then the connection has been let go—the vital bond of faith, which is the conductor of that celestial fire, we have let go—and going out into the world, and letting the world lay waste our powers, we have lost the knowledge of the Saviour, the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering.

Let us look at the second point which the text presents before us, and see how we are to guard against these separations from Christ: "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ." Growth is the law of development of the Christian life. The same idea is exhibited with great variety of expression in the Scriptures. In the Phi-

lippians, for example, Paul says : " Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended : but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

There is great beauty and aptness in the figure of growth as applicable to the Christian life. Take it with reference to the growth of a plant or a child. From the seed the plant shoots into the outward air, and, having in it an inward principle of life, it requires certain outward conditions for its growth. And from the humblest flower that grows, to the highest organized human body, that inward principle of life is an entire mystery. Among all the results of modern physical science there has been no approximation to a comprehension or explanation of the mystery of life in a plant or an animal. We call it life. There is a vital principle, it must be admitted, which controls us. The chemistry of the human body is controlled by what we call physiological and chemical laws, but the vital principle coming into contact with them upsets them. If we were to attempt to follow the laws of chemistry, which we learn from analysis, without making allowance for the operation of the vital force to regulate or control the principle of life, we should fall into the most absurd results in medical practice or in the conduct of

life itself. This inward life is a mystery ; its outward condition is the law of growth. The plant requires for its development soil, air, warmth, moisture, and sunlight, and then this law of its nature will be impressed upon it. The acorn, if planted, will take upon itself, as it grows up, the characteristics of the oak that it is to be, and so of any other plant. So, too, of the human body. The child is born and comes into an outward atmosphere suited for it, and by light and warmth, food and air, its tissues grow harmoniously together, every part of them in its proper adjustment to every other—muscles and tendons, flesh and bone, each growing in a proper ratio to each other according to their common life, by partaking of the outward elements adapted to the nourishment of the organism. Then as the child goes on, it requires, in addition to air, food and warmth, exercise in order to develop the muscles, and give the frame compactness and vigor, without which the child would be puny and imperfect. Without light, warmth, food, and exercise, or by the withholding of any one of them, you may have a growth, but an imperfect growth. Withhold all light, for example. The child will be a delicate child. Reared in the dark, it will be pale as a flower grown in a cave. It may even grow rapidly, but it will become debilitated, and by and by it will decay and die ; and so with the other elements of growth—withhold

more of them, and the result will be still worse, and you may get by and by a misshapen, hideous monster, painful to look upon.

Let us look at this, and apply it to the Christian life. Corresponding to the birth of the child, is the regeneration of the soul. Christ's own figure is the new birth in the inner life, and that new birth takes place in virtue of a mysterious principle of life, inspired by the Holy Ghost, purchased by Jesus Christ, and given to us by him for the regeneration of the soul in the beginning of this inner life, and afterward in its growth and development. Many people object to vital Christianity on this account. "You speak of a vital connection with Christ. I cannot understand it; it is mystical." It is no more mystical than the vital principle in your own organization, in the blade of grass before your door, or the oak-tree that overshadows your house. If there were no mystery there would be no life, for life itself is an immense mystery. We have not understood it yet, and we cannot, until we pass those crystal doors that shall admit us into the home of life. This is only the vestibule, and we know not the secrets of the inner palace. The inner life is the life of God in the soul, and this must be preserved and perpetuated in the soul in order that there shall be any growth at all in grace and knowledge. It is not possible for us to grow without this inner life any

more than it is possible for the child to grow if the vital force is withdrawn.

Then come the outward conditions, the use of the means. The very atmosphere is a great thing for the growth of the soul. Indeed, you will observe that we come upon certain analogies that I did not allude to before. We have a great control over these elements ourselves. We can to a certain extent command the atmosphere in which we live. In some of the wards of this city, such as the fifteenth, the annual rate of mortality is one in sixty-two, while in others it is one in twenty-seven. What is the reason? Because in the former we find well-ventilated dwellings, the atmosphere is adapted to the human organism, the lungs play freely. In the other case the air is poisoned, and breathed over and over again until, charged with deadly quantities of carbonic acid, the lungs become diseased, and every breath which ought to be a breath of life is a breath of death. Just so with the life of the soul. You can command for yourselves the outward environment, can choose your own company, books, and newspapers; and you and your children may have your associations among God's children, or choose for your friends men that despise the Saviour; may read books that will cultivate your minds, refine the heart, enlarge the intellect, and expand the moral powers; or spend your time in reading

vile novels or bad and corrupting books. All this is making the atmosphere in which your soul lives and grows. There is a great deal in this for the consideration of each of us, remembering that the vital power of Christianity depends for its development within us on the conditions which we ourselves, to a very great extent, have control over.

Then the exercise we take is essential to a thorough and healthful growth. We call the exercises means of grace, and among these exercises are household piety and prayer, class-meeting and prayer-meeting, and listening to the word of God (as a means of grace, and not merely for intellectual culture;) the use of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and Christian charity—doing good deeds, giving gifts, visiting the sick—and so we may build up the muscle and sinew and nerve of our immortal souls. Many of us seem to think of our souls as if they could go on and flourish, and get a natural and substantial growth, without much exercise in the worship of God, in family and private prayers, and without any exercise in Christian benevolence, thinking all the time that because we have had a certain initial impulse in Christian life we are safe, and that our souls are growing in grace and in the love of God. Ah, what a fearful error!

The physical organization of the plant cannot do without light, and so it is again in the Christian

life. Light is essential to the healthful growth of the soul just as it is to the healthful growth of the body. Christianity is free from every thing like superstition. The New Testament is free from sentimental and mawkish religion, from every thing that will not bear the test of scrutiny. It is sensible religion all the way through. It comes to the light, and asks that the light may be thrown upon it. It cannot and will not live in the darkness. The fiercest accusation Christ brought against the world was that the world loved darkness rather than light because its ways were evil. We must have light, and where shall we seek it? This Book is the sun of the whole moral world, this is the source of all light upon morals, upon the conduct of this life, and of all light upon the hope of the future. How is it with us and the word of God? We cannot grow in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ unless we are Bible students, and seeking daily for new treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The agencies of growth are innumerable on every side of us. God has scattered them, and it is only for us to take them up and make use of them. Nature, that environs us on every hand; the history and experience of mankind, as well as the word of God—all these agencies are lying about us to be used for the growth of our minds, the development of our hearts, and the enlargement of the

Christian life within us, if we will but make use of them.

But *what* we shall grow to be depends upon our power of assimilation, and the power of assimilation depends upon the nature, strength, and degree of the inner life within us. Put two plants side by side, one of them the violet, and the other the nightshade — which produces a very beautiful flower—they have the same soil, and about them the same sunshine and genial showers. One of them, according to the law of its nature, derives from these elements beauty and fragrance, gathers from air and soil and sunshine the lovely qualities of the violet. The other has gathered from the very same elements the sources of poison and death. So it is, brethren, with us in relation to all the elements of growth that are about us. If the vital force that is within us is the Christian life, then from all the lessons of nature, as we go out to look upon it, from all the voices of earth, and air, and sea, from the harmonies of the celestial spheres, and all the utterances by which God speaks in this grand temple which he has built for his worship and our culture, we are gathering new Christian powers, new elements of godliness. On the other hand, if the life that is within us is a worldly, selfish, or devilish life, we may have intellectual forces, and assimilate by them, and gather power for evil, strength to secrete poison:

poison that shall eat our own life out, at the same time that it diffuses miasma and death in society about us. Let us see that the light that is within us be not darkness.

Further, this law of growth is imperative in the Christian life ; it is this or nothing ; it is grow or decay. One or the other you must do. The poets tell us of a fire-fly in southern climates, said to be the most brilliant of all fire-flies, which has this peculiarity, that it never shines at all except when going rapidly upon the wing, and then its brilliancy can be seen afar. So it is with our immortal souls. When we are upon the wing, active and advancing, going forward in the Christian race toward God and toward heaven, our light shines out and all men see it ; but when we stand still it dies. Our soul itself is full of the instinct of advancement and progression. Wherefore is it but that this law may be illustrated, that there “burns in mortal bosoms this unquenched hope that breathes from day to day sublimer things, and mocks possession” of the things we have ? That we may be every day going on to perfection ! This is ‘the law of the Christian life within us.

I have used this word “perfection,” and used it purposely, because it is the word of God and of the Scripture. Perfection in the Christian life is not inconsistent with growth. There is no discrepancy

between the law of growth here set forth and the injunction, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." How is it with the physical organization? Take the child ten years old, ruddy and fresh-skinned, the blood coming to the surface with an active circulation showing that the heart is vigorous, with changing play of countenance and complexion, eye clear and lustrous, and all the movements lithe and nimble and active, and you say, that is a perfect organization; there is nothing wanting; all the way through it is perfect. Here is another child, pining and sickly, and you say there is some imperfection in the organization, some morbid agencies are at work. Just so it is in the Christian life. Let all who are born again into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ only give themselves wholly to God, consecrate themselves absolutely to his service, say to the world, "Thou shalt not master me, but in God's name I will master thee, and use thee for my spiritual growth!" This is what the Bible means when it says, "Be ye perfect,"—absolute consecration to God's service, thorough dedication to him of heart and mind and life. Is there any thing inconsistent with growth in this? Not at all. Take a man who has been for twenty-five years living in this absolute devotion to the service of God, will he not profit by every opportunity, assimilating all the elements of growth and strength

about him for his own personal growth within? If his religious habits were sickly, feeble, and half-formed he could not use these opportunities. How few there are in full possession of muscular and nervous vigor! And why? Because the world has gone very far astray from the original intention of its Maker. God meant that those who live this human life should be—every man and woman—perfect in mental and physical organization. Sin has brought this corruption, and made these pale faces, these quivering and tremulous organizations; in which nerves which ought to be the sources of life and vigor are only messengers of pain and anguish. It is sin that has done all this. So it is in the moral world. How few people we see of perfect moral organization, illustrating the beautiful example of Christ, and showing it among men! In his Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul prays for the people thus: “That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge”—this might seem a paradox, but it is not—“that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” Paul prayed that for the Ephesians. O,

my brethren, I pray for myself and you, that we **may** know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; that we may be filled with all the fullness of God; and that, under the inspiration of this knowledge, under the power of this fullness of divine love, we may be vigorous Christians, living for our faith, and, if need be, ready to die for it; growing in the knowledge and love of Christ.

There are tests by which to ascertain this growth. How is it with you? You have been for five years, ten or twenty, I do not know how many years, a member of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you received the Holy Ghost? Are you a better Christian now than you were at first? better able to resist temptation? Have you less love of the world, less selfishness and avarice? Are you more charitable, liberal, and Christ-like? Ah! as we get on in life and increase in goods and comforts, how apt we are to grow selfish! I knew a man some years ago, a Sunday-school teacher, working with his own hands for his bread, but full of all Christian activities. Go to him for any Christian charity, for something for the wider diffusion of the word of God, for the cause of missions, or for any of those great agencies which are transforming the face of this wilderness world of ours, and that man from his daily labor always had his gift ready. He is very rich now, has increased his goods, and lives in

a grand house, and keeps a carriage, and horses, and servants, and plate ; go to him now and he will give you perhaps a little more than when he was a journeyman, and perhaps not even that. Ah ! what a sad, sad thing it is ! I remember a lad with whom I went to school. We often took sweet counsel together. He was a boy who promised well ; was free from all the evil tendencies of youth. Now he is a millionaire, and I have turned to see what he is doing for the advancement of God's kingdom among men, and to see that he lives not altogether for himself, but have turned in vain. The millionaire I know, the man I cannot find ; the very soul is gone out of him. Now, brethren, test yourselves by such examples as these. Do you find that you are growing in Christian charity and love, and are more willing to make sacrifices in the cause of Almighty God than you were some years ago ? Then you are growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Take a sure test. Do you pray ?—really, earnestly pray ? Do you find access to Christ in prayer, and that your soul grows in prayer ? Do you rise—to use a very beautiful figure of Jeremy Taylor—do you rise, as you may sometimes see the lark—the English sky-lark—rising from his bed of grass, and ascending, ascending, and singing the louder and sweeter and stronger as he rises—upward and upward, as you get nearer to the throne, richer in gifts

and in power? Then are you growing in this divine grace and knowledge.

But perhaps, tried by these tests, you are wanting in that fullness of power, in that Christian perfection, to which you should have attained. Alas! you cannot say that God's grace has not been given to you! Let us watch and pray that the opportunities He has still in store for us may not be afforded in vain.

VI.

THE OPEN DOOR—AT HOME.

But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.—
1 Cor. xvi, 8, 9.

THIS portion of the Epistle was written from Ephesus at the time of the events stated in the 19th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. "I will tarry at Ephesus." What were his inducements to tarry? A wide sphere of usefulness, and a powerful opposition; these were his inducements. Not precisely the inducements that govern mankind in general; perhaps not precisely the inducements that always govern Christian ministers and Christian people.

Let us see whether we can gather from this narrative in the Acts, and from this declaration of St. Paul in reference to the circumstances that then environed him, lessons for our own instruction, and for our own guidance in our relations to the Christian Church and the advancement of the work of God.

You will find three points in the text which come naturally out of it. In St. Paul's case there was a

great and effectual door opened ; this is one point. There were many adversaries ; that is another point. Thirdly, he determined upon a certain line of conduct in consequence: "I will tarry until Pentecost."

These three points will afford us the practical lessons that we seek this morning. The opening of a great and effectual door: this might be taken as to the wants of mankind about us, in the community. In the city of New York, for instance, there is always a great door open for doing good. It might be taken as to the wants of the world at large, the missionary fields and openings, which are, at this time especially, greater than they have ever been before in the history of the Christian Church. But I shall not dwell upon these points to-day ; they will find their appropriate treatment in connection with our missionary sermons when they come to be preached. Let us take the text with reference to the ordinary work of the Church. There is always a door open in the Christian Church for gathering in sinners, and preaching the Gospel of Christ. It is sometimes more widely open than at others ; greater and more effectual. The Church of Christ has at this time a right to say as St. Paul said—and perhaps never had a greater right to say it than she has to-day—that a great and effectual door is open for the preaching of the Gospel. To apply the text specially to our own case, however, to our immediate

congregation, our own wants and duties, is perhaps the best thing for us this morning.

There is a degree of attention paid to religious things unknown some years ago ; an open ear on the part of multitudes of mankind to listen to God's truth, where nothing but dullness or obstinate resistance existed in past years ; an evidence that the Holy Spirit is at work largely on the minds of men in this generation ; that the Church is upon the eve of great events, nay, that great events have already come upon the Church ; that her steps are to be more rapid than they have been heretofore ; that the movement of the Church, which is always as the tread of a giant upon the earth, is hereafter to be a grander movement than it has ever been before—these are forebodings common to the Christian mind. It is for us to say how far we as a Church—the Christian body which meets here Sunday after Sunday under circumstances as favorable for the development of a Christian life and for the enlargement of the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ within a certain sphere as were ever enjoyed by any body of Christian men and women since the day of Pentecost—how far we share this genial influence, how far we recognize the opening of the door, and how far, when open, we are ready to step in and do the work which God puts upon us. What symptoms have we of the opening of a door for us as a congregation ?

I see it in this large and patient congregation ; in the multitudes that gather here Sunday after Sunday, willing to listen to the word of God, or listening whether they will or not ; with their ears open to the preacher's words ; with their hearts — unconsciously it may be — tenderer than they have been for years ; with their minds in a state of greater readiness to receive the word of God, and the arguments upon which Christianity rests her proofs ; with their minds more inclined to accept the truth. In all these outward indications we have the signs of the opening of a great and effectual door ; and whenever this is the case in any Church, it is for the minister and people of that Church to recognize these signs and to act upon them.

Another sign is when not merely the ordinary congregations worshipping are large and attentive and willing to be taught, but especially when those that are members of the Church itself, its regular communicants, are quickened in their religious life ; when there are signs that those who are in the presence of the Lord Jesus are endeavoring to get nearer and nearer to his cross ; that those who enjoy the baptism of the Holy Ghost are praying and looking daily and hourly for a larger and richer affluence of the spirit ; these too are signs that the work of God is coming upon a Church. Are these signs here ? To a very large extent. If the condition of individ-

ual members of this Church be compared with what it was a while ago, they will be found to have a greater religious earnestness, a closer conscientiousness, a more intimate and earnest self-scrutiny as to what the law of God is, what the call of duty is, what the scope and breadth of religious experience is, what the need of the individual soul is ; in all this there is a vast improvement in the condition of the members of this Church. At all events, it seems to me that I can see and feel, by that sort of mysterious magnetism which is the richest bond between man and man, and certainly the richest bond between the pastor and the flock—that I can see and feel the movement of this holy spirit between you and me : I can feel that we are getting gradually to take noble views of the Christian work of the Gospel which is intrusted to us ; that our Saviour, the blessed Jesus whom we follow, is exalted before our minds more and more ; that we are getting more and more to look upon the cross as the great centre, to which all pure affections should tend ; and in this gradual expansion of our minds, in this enlargement of our views, in this development of our best affections, in these aspirations of our nobler nature, we are admitting the Holy Ghost to work within us.

That there are multitudes of sinners here to be converted—many of them willing to be converted, whom the Holy Spirit has touched ; many sitting in

these seats, here, and there, and yonder, that are seeking to know the Son of God ; many again that have been backsliders, and are seeking to be reclaimed ; many who sit in silence, and are in secret longing for a better life than they have led—I have no doubt whatever. O, brethren, the door is open here, a great door and effectual, for you and me to do our work of evangelism !

We now come to the second point : the adversaries in the way of the work of God. And, brethren, we must look for these adversaries not in the will of God, or the arrangements of God's providence. Sometimes we are disposed to excuse our own indolence and indifference to the advancement of the cause of Christ by saying that the Holy Spirit is not operating, that the will of God does not seem to be that his work should spread and his name be glorified. There is no time when it is true that God's will is, that the car of Christ's progress should be arrested or delayed. God wills the universal diffusion of his truth. His own declaration is, that he is not willing that any should perish, but rather that all should come unto him and live. When difficulties are raised, and objections made of the want of adaptability of the Gospel to the needs of mankind, you will observe, if you have read the history of the Church, or studied the subject in your own experience, that men complain most of the want of

adaptation on the part of Christianity when they have least sense of religion themselves ; and when the Church is doing the least possible in the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, and its members are indulging themselves in selfishness, in every form in which it can manifest itself ; when the lust of worldly pleasures, the lust of the eye and the pride of life, absorb the souls that ought to be all alive to God, and all instinct with a holy ambition to propagate his Gospel—then do we find complaint of the want of adaptation in the Gospel to do its proper work. But the evil lies not there. This Gospel of the Lord Jesus is the last hope of mankind for the elevation of the human intellect, for the purification of the human heart. In it are bound up all the interests we have in this life—progress, advancement, learning, culture, civilization—call it what you may—in it are bound up all these, for these are nothing after all but the wheels of the car of the Gospel of the Son of God ! The Gospel clashes with no true interest of mankind ; but always, under all circumstances, meets all the wants of every human soul. No, brethren, the fault is not in the Gospel, but in the world, and in us.

Let us revert to the case of St. Paul, as stated in the text. He found at Ephesus the Pagan opposition, based on the old religion, and to this was added worldly interest, because the temple of Diana was

not merely the centre of an immense worship, but of a vast trade. The craftsmen of Diana gained a living by making the small models and images which were so great a part of the trade of Ephesus. He found habits and religious prejudices which had been growing for ages, all opposed to the progress of the Gospel.

He found all these ; but they were not the greatest obstacles that he met there, or those that caused him most trouble or most pain. He knew that he should find the world opposed to him ; but this was not his greatest obstacle. It is not with the faithful minister of the Gospel of God now. It is not, for instance, the fear that the wicked people of the city of New York will oppose the spread of the Gospel that makes the faithful Pastor tremble, but the fear that his own heart will fail him, his own zeal die away ; that his own flock will not be faithful to him ; that his own familiar friends will shrink from him in the time of trial ; that the love of the world in the very flock to which he preaches will eat out the love of God and zeal for souls. These are the adversaries, the stern foes, the walls of adamant. It is only by the power of a living faith that the faithful minister can work on against such foes as these. The bitterest of all enmities are the enmities of home, when a man's enemies are those of his own household. There are no wars like those which

take place within the four walls where peace should reign: a war concealed from the world, attempted to be concealed even from the very hearts in which it is waging; and yet such a war there always is whenever the Church is not faithful to the great deposit of the Gospel which is committed to it.

Other adversaries are the hypocritical or backslidden members of the Church. You remember how it was at Ephesus. Paul came there, and inquired of certain disciples, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" And they answered, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." That was the first difficulty with the Apostle at Ephesus. And now, brethren, I ask you, as St. Paul asked those Ephesian disciples, this question to-day—and may the Holy Spirit carry it home to your hearts and consciences—"Have *you* received the Holy Ghost since you believed?" Have you admitted this celestial visitant, and obeyed his voice of power? Is it so? Then you are not adversaries to the advancement of the Lord's kingdom, but helping it forward by that mysterious power which the Holy Ghost supplies to those whom He controls. But if, on the other hand, you are content with the original initial impulse received at your conversion, content with being gathered into the Church, and having your name enrolled on its books; nay, if your religious life to-day be

colder, weaker, feebler in all respects than when you began it, let the question again ring in your ears, "Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?" Let us not live as if, with the Ephesian disciples, we had never heard of the Holy Ghost—as if the name of that power, which is the life-power of the Church, had never reached our ears!

Further, cold disciples, indifferent about souls and the advancement of the word of God, are adversaries to the progress of a general revival. A striking illustration of what is meant by this class of disciples you will find revealed in the Gospel in the case of Bartimeus. When Christ was going into Jericho this blind man was sitting by the way-side begging, and, as the Saviour was passing along the dusty highway — by some strange instinct with which God compensates in this life for want of sight, by one of those kind dispensations by which God makes up for some of our imperfections by a clearer and diviner sense—he recognized the Saviour; and as he heard the footsteps come nearer, and knew that Jesus stood in front of him, he raised his voice and cried, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" One would have thought that such an appeal as this would not only reach that ear, which is never turned away from any sufferer's cry, the All-loving and All-sympathizing, but that it would awaken the sympathy of the disciples; but some of them turned around to him

and charged him that he should hold his peace. "You disturb the Master ; you are in rags ; you are but a poor beggar"—it was in the heyday of the Saviour's popularity — "you disturb him by these beggarly cries." How can you account for this conduct on the part of some of those who had been with Jesus and listened to his teaching ? Just as you can account for your own conduct if you will analyze it. We hear that souls are converted. "Who is it ?" "Well, it is such a one—an apprentice boy." Again, "Who is it ?" "A servant girl in such a family." And still, "Who is it ?" "Some poor blind beggar by the way-side—that is all." Have we no consciousness of any such feeling as this coldness and indifference ?

These disciples showed three things—a want of sympathy with suffering, a want of charity for the sufferer, and a want of faith in the living Redeemer. Is it not so with us ? We show ourselves a want of *sympathy* with sinners when we are not always awake and alive to hear the first distant moan of the soul struck by the power of the Holy Spirit ; not always ready to run when we hear, even, from the lips of the beggar or the blind man, the cry, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me !" We should be ready with a quick sympathy at the very first utterance even from the lowest of mankind, and fly to them, and lead them to where the Master is.

Then they showed a want of *charity*. They thought, perhaps, that this blind man was an impostor, that he had no claims upon the Saviour. Are we never so guilty? When we hear of certain persons having sought religious influence the first impression is a sneer: "A poor, worthless wretch like that; I have heard of his seeking religion half a dozen times before." This want of charity only reveals the coldness, emptiness, and wrong condition of our own hearts.

And then, further, a want of *faith* was displayed by the disciples. They thought that perhaps the Saviour could not heal that blind man, and if he tried and failed there would be disrepute brought upon the Gospel. Our want of faith in the power of Christ's Gospel, in the Holy Ghost, and the religion we profess, is often more startling than this. The Gospel may be useful in bringing the people together and keeping them out of mischief; but when do you look for the supernatural manifestation of its power? when do you look for a man or woman to be converted under the sound of the preacher's voice here in the Church? Should it not be the case? Why should not that man who has resisted the Holy Spirit for months or years, that woman who has been considering her soul's case so long; why should they not rise up under the sound of my voice to the power and liberty of the children of God? Because

perhaps neither you nor I have faith enough in the power of the very Gospel which we preach and believe in. Let us try for a more earnest faith, a more powerful and genuine conviction that the Gospel is really what we think it to be—the power of God to salvation ; that it has within it the elements of strength and saving for all mankind.

We have an example of faith in the case of Elijah. When the whole land was covered with sorrowing and weeping, and famine was approaching on account of the drought that had lasted so long, the prophet of God went up to the top of Mount Carmel and knelt with his head between his knees and prayed to Almighty God for rain. He was a man of faith. His servant was with him, and he sent the servant to look out toward the sea, and inquire and bring him word again what the promise was. And the servant said, “Master, I see nothing.” And still the prophet was there with his head between his knees, prostrate upon the ground in prayer, and the prayer ascended still ; and he sent him again, and wearily the servant went again and again. And the second time he said, “I see nothing ;” and the third time, “I see nothing ;” and the fourth and fifth times. Perhaps you would suppose Elijah’s voice would weary, and that he could not keep himself thus prostrate even by the exercise of religious faith. There is no such record as that. He still went on

with his prayers, and yet again his servant came back with the same empty story ; and still the man of God sent him back again ; and at last, after the seventh coming, he said, “ I see a little cloud in the sky no bigger than a man’s hand.” And the prophet rose up, and said to him, “ Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.” What ground had he for it ? None, but that he had prayed to God, and believed in God, and there was a little cloud in the sky no bigger than a man’s hand. And then, too, the record says that all the sluices of heaven were opened, and the land was drenched with the descending rain. And now it may be that we too have prayed, with our heads in the dust, that God would revive his work ; asking, What is the sign ? and the answer is, Nothing ; no converts, no awakening ; and still, if we have been patient and hopeful, we can look out and see a cloud, though it be no bigger than a man’s hand. And now to-day I summon you with me to exercise that prophet’s faith, and believe that by and by we shall have the shower coming from all the heavens, drenching us with the power of the Holy Ghost. O for the faith of an Elijah ! O for the faith of a Luther ! contending with his foes again and again, with the heavens dark above him, and yet waiting for the final triumph ! Let us believe, and, believing, go in at the effectual door that is opened out before us.

Lastly, we have the result—the determination of St. Paul: “I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.” Here we find the lesson for ourselves ; not saying, Let us stop our praying, our efforts in God’s cause ; but, I will stay, I will tarry, I will keep on with my praying and preaching, my individual activity for the advancement of the cause of Christ, and wait for the Pentecost. Is that our determination ? Let us make it in faith to-day ! The adversaries are perhaps as great as St. Paul found them, though they may take different shapes. But O how great are our encouragements ! If God be for us who can be against us ?

The Church never has been without her difficulties and obstacles both within and without. Samson had his Philistines to contend with, and he did not shrink in the power which God had given him. The enemy was in his own household, and, after he had yielded to the blandishments of a foolish wife, he went on praying and believing and trusting until the emblem of his power returned, and then he was strong enough to tear down with one effort the pillars of the greatest temple in Syria. Nehemiah had his Sanballat and Tobiah to weaken his hands, and deter him from his work. And when Sanballat sends his messages to us that nothing can be done, and we need not trouble ourselves on behalf of the Church, let us pray as Nehemiah prayed, “O God, strengthen my hands !” And then when they seek

to turn you aside from your work, say as Nehemiah said to them, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and come down to you?" Let us do so, and we shall find, as Elijah did at Dotham when his enemies environed him by night with a cordon of troops, horsemen and footmen and chariots on every hand ; so that when his servant went forth in the morning he brought him word that the mount was surrounded with chariots and horsemen, and he asked, "Alas ! my master, how shall we do ?" But his master knew in whom he trusted ; the Lord's prophet knew that, no matter how many or how strong his foes, he had a power behind him and within him stronger than all of them. So, by the exercise of a simple faith, he raised his voice to God, and prayed that the eyes of his servant might be opened that he might see. And he looked around, and there, upon the hills on every hand, above this cordon that seemed arrayed to compass and secure their death, hovering in the air, back upon the hills, rising, squadron upon squadron, their celestial armor glistening in the morning sunlight, he saw the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof. So it is with us if we are faithful to our Master. There may be enemies in the world and in our hearts, enemies in the backsliders that are in the Church, enemies in the cold and lukewarm Christians, and even those whom the

Holy Spirit is teaching and taking hold of; but around us all are the chariots and horsemen of heaven, the power of Christ and of his Holy Spirit. Let us tarry as did Paul, and by and by the day of Pentecost will come, and we shall see, as we have never seen before, the power of God revealed in this His house.

VII.

THE OPEN DOOR—ABROAD.

A great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.—*1 Cor. xvi, 9.*

I USED this text a few Sundays ago with reference to the Church at home; it will furnish us a theme to-day to consider as well the state and prospects of the Church in the world at large. "A great and effectual door" suggests an opening for the propagation of Christianity. "There are many adversaries." This clause suggests to us the obstacles in the way of that propagation; and these are the two divisions of the subject—natural, and, I trust, simple.

That the whole world needs Christianity is a proposition that I need not here undertake to establish. We all know very well that the world—the Pagan world—without the Gospel is destitute of moral goodness. There is no moral goodness among men, except where Christianity has taken root. The natural virtues exist to a certain extent among the Pagans, because, as I have repeatedly explained to you, a certain observance of the natural virtues is

essential to the very existence of human society; and where society exists, even in its most rudimental forms, if it be society at all, there must be an observance of the natural virtues to a certain extent: the love of parents for their children and of children for their parents, the laws of property, the relations of mine and thine. If society is developed at all, these things come up of necessity for its conservation. But these virtues are only partially and imperfectly observed in Pagan countries compared with Christian lands. Let us take one single point of illustration. The essence of Christian character is faith—faith between man and his Maker, then faith in the relations of man to man in society; and the duty that grows out of this relation is truthfulness between man and man, as well as confidence in God, and veracity and honesty in dealing with Him. The idea of veracity, as necessarily ruling human life and conduct, is nowhere found except in Christian lands. Only imperfectly is it carried out here, I admit, but so very much beyond all the advances of heathendom in this line of morality is Christianity that you may take it as a characteristic. Among the Chinese veracity is not regarded. The testimony of all travelers is much the same—that truth is there considered a secondary matter. And yet, as we are very well taught, this is the cohesive point of human society. Cicero declared it nearly two thousand years

ago with the light he possessed. We know it more clearly under the knowledge we have from God. Truthfulness between man and man is almost unknown, except under the dominion of Christianity. It does not exist under Pagan religions; it did not exist under the best of the Pagan religions—that of Greece and Rome in their most highly cultivated periods. It is not now in Pagan lands the direst insult that can be offered to a man to tell him he lies, as it is in this country.

Let us consider. How much of the world is in this Pagan condition? Two thirds of the whole earth. The population of the globe is eleven hundred millions; some make it eleven hundred and fifty; and out of this the Pagans are six hundred and seventy-five millions, the Mohammedans one hundred and forty millions, the Jews fourteen millions, and the Christians three hundred and twenty millions. Two thirds of the whole number are sitting in heathen darkness, living in the morality of Paganism.

Are they satisfied with this state of things—even the heathen themselves? No, my brethren, all records of past Pagandom, especially where Pagandom possessed the forms of civilization and culture—and, in fact, we have no historical records except where there is or was civilization and culture—all show the expectation of a higher form of life;

throughout all there is a yearning for a better state of things. Travelers—sailors, missionaries, and men that go to the ends of the earth—tell us there is among the heathen world an unconscious yearning for a higher state of existence. Every-where the visions of a lost Eden haunt the descendants of Adam and Eve, expelled from the garden by the anger of a God whose law they had violated ; every-where, coming down through the ages, darkened, distorted, and almost lost, but yet surviving by force of the Divine power that is in them, there are the traditions of a better age—the golden age of man—when the light of God shone upon his face. And so among the very darkest tribes you find a yearning for a better life than this.

These hundreds of millions of whom I have spoken have been, to a large extent, inaccessible to the Gospel. But within the last year, more than any year since Jesus Christ ascended from the hill of Bethany, leaving to his disciples the commission, “Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”—within the last year, more than in any year since that blessed ascent of the Saviour, has the world been opened to the propagation of that Saviour’s truth—has the way opened for the descendants of his Apostles to go, in obedience to his command, and teach all nations. Doors that have seemed for

thousands of years to be of adamant, thrice locked, have been suddenly opened. Nationalities that have seemed for ages to be environed by walls of prejudice, of hoary traditions, of strong and powerful superstitions—triple walls indeed—nationalities thus environed are suddenly opened to the access of Gospel light. Marvelous are the developments of the last year! Few of us have begun to contemplate them in all their length and breadth and fullness; fewer still have asked, “How does this bear on me?”

Those of you who have read that extraordinary book, “Livingstone’s Travels in Africa,” have learned from it that in the centre of that country there is a rich, fertile, and comparatively healthful territory; large districts in which white men may live without being exposed, as they are on the sea-coast, to the perils of almost fatal miasma; and that there are uncounted thousands of African natives, comparatively docile, who are of a higher grade of intelligence and culture than those upon the coast, and willing to be taught the rites and religion of the Gospel. There alone a door is opened to sixty millions of Pagans.

Let us turn our attention for a moment to Asia, that land of teeming myriads, where men are so crowded together that they jostle each other at every step they take in life? How is it there?

In India an insurrection, and the suppression of the insurrection, have caused the British Government to assume the direct control of the country ; and you know one of the consequences of these wars has been to turn the eyes of the whole British community, and of necessity, to a greater extent, to turn the eyes of the British Government, upon the superstitions of the country. The government must inevitably adopt a principle the very opposite of that which has guided them in the past. Tolerate them they may, for toleration is the very nature of the Gospel of Jesus Christ ; to sustain them, feed them, nourish them as it has done heretofore, to the shame and disgrace of that great nation, will hereafter be impossible. More than that, the fact of this insurrection and the suppression of it will show the millions of the heathen there the utter folly of contending with Christian power, and the reverence so inspired for Christian power will be the opening of a great and effectual door for the preaching to them of the Christian truth. And further still, the closer scrutiny through which the whole course of the government must go, with thousands of eyes looking on where only one was turned before, must tend to better the condition of these people, and make them more accessible to the preaching of the Gospel and the representations of both British and American missionaries. Here a door is thrown more widely

open than ever to preach the Gospel to three hundred millions of our race.

Let us turn to China, that land of old and strange mystery, a land on which the imaginations of our occidental poets and dreamers have dwelt for thousands of years, until we have come to consider it as fabled Cathay—almost as dream-land itself; and yet we meet, as we turn to it, with sober, substantial facts. The population is estimated by the Registrar General at five hundred millions. The Bishop of Victoria estimates it at four hundred millions—one third of the entire population of the whole earth in that one region, and under that one government. To get a faint idea of this population, allowing it to be four hundred millions, suppose that these millions were to pass up that aisle, and up in front of this chancel, and down through the other aisle, one by one, none of us would live to see the end of that procession, unless it may be the youngest children among us. A century, all but a few years, would have to roll by before the march would end. And now to these millions upon millions of our fellows the door is opened as it has never been opened before. Indeed it never has been opened before; every attempt to preach the Gospel there has been almost a total failure so far as the interior of the country is concerned, and the attempt has been almost certain death. Even to the Roman Catholic missionaries, with

all their skill, it has been death after death. They have been treading upon treacherous ashes at every step. And now, not only are the ports open in a certain loose way, but foreigners may go through the whole empire; Christianity may be propagated under the distinct protection of a treaty, and Christians themselves must be protected by officers of the government. The Bishop of Victoria, in a letter dated on the eighteenth of October, and filled with Christian tenderness and kindness, says: the American minister, Mr. Read, has the high distinction of being the first ever to obtain by the stipulations of a treaty an honorable mention of the beneficent character of the Christian religion, and secure universal toleration for native converts throughout the Chinese empire. The treaty of Lord Elgin has gained for foreigners free access to the interior of the country, and overthrown the last barriers that interrupted our free communication with every part of China. There is something exceedingly beautiful in this combination of the American and British ministers securing, each of them, a treaty, made, it is true, by worldly hands, and made in worldly interests, but each of them inserting in his treaty this specific declaration in favor of Christianity and in favor of Christian missionaries. What is this but the coming time when the true relations between Christianity and civilization shall be understood; when the diplomacy as well as the com-

merce of the earth shall be subservient to the propagation of the Gospel of Christ? Unquestionably this shall be the rule in the long run, and this is its inauguration. It might well be that that little copper wire lying stretched across the Atlantic from the Irish coast to Newfoundland should carry across the thrilling message that this treaty had been made with China and then speak no more, as if its work were done. It might well be so. This is the opening of a new era, when diplomatists make mention of Christianity as one of the necessities of a treaty, and news of it can run to and fro over the earth with the speed of lightning.

Further, we have thought of Japan as a still more mysterious land than China, and our dreams of it have been as of a land of gems and gold; but now we have learned that Japan contains twenty-five or thirty millions of people living under a very fair and tolerable civilization, and that the outward moralities are pretty well observed, and the vices of more tropical regions are not known, industry and thrift being the prevailing characteristics of the people. And, finally, we have made a treaty with Japan, and these thirty millions are open to the preaching of the Gospel as they never have been before.

I have said enough. A great and effectual door is opened when thus in one year three, four, or five hundred millions of our race are, for the first time,

brought within hearing of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus. A great and effectual door! We can almost apply the psalm, although in a sense different from that for which it was originally intended: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall go in." Gates are lifted, barriers are fallen, doors are opened. It is for us to say whether the ark of the covenant shall go forward to enter them, whether the army of Heaven shall pass through them or not, for we are the guardians of that ark of the covenant.

And now let us look, in the second place, at the obstacles in the way of the propagation of the Gospel. The obstacles are not in the plan of God. If Christianity does not advance as rapidly as we think it ought, the obstacles, the adversaries, are not in the plan and arrangement of God. His whole word is filled with the doctrine that the Christian religion is to triumph universally. The heathen are to be given to Christ for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession; that the time shall come when by every nation and kindred and people and tongue the name of the Lord Jesus shall be adored. The plan of God for the redemption of Christ is that it shall triumph over all its foes, and all mankind shall share in its blessings.

We are wont to account the existence of a heathen civilization, like that of China or India, as obstacles

in the way of the propagation of the Gospel. I would not underrate them. Enormous, indeed, is the power of a superstition wrought into the very groundwork of a nation's life, which has had thousands of years to grow, and has developed itself into a mighty tree, with wide-spreading branches, under which millions of men fancy they are taking rest and repose. And so of all other elements of Paganism: they are mighty and strong. And yet the great fact at the root of them all is that the carnal mind is enmity against God—is not of itself obedient to the law of God, and cannot be. The root of it all is in human depravity. And now for what purpose was Christ manifest among men but that he might destroy the works of the devil? that this depravity should give way before the moral doctrine and power he should bring into the world? that the blood which he shed should, with the march of His Gospel, purge the nations in its advance? And this Gospel is adapted to its end, as God adapts his instruments and endows his teachers and his preachers with the power essential to the great undertaking. There is no want of adaptation in the Gospel. It has proved itself, wherever tried, to be the highest civilizer, the best moralizer, and most potent ruler over the hearts and habits of men and nations—and this is history.

Where, then, are these obstacles and adversaries? They cannot be found outside of the Church in God's

plan, nor in the want of adaptation of the Gospel; nor can we find them in the degradation and superstition of the heathen. Where then, brethren, shall we look for them? Let us look at home; let us look into our own habits of mind, our own modes of feeling and thinking and acting; then let us ask no longer where are the adversaries of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus! The Church of God is empowered and authorized to do this work of propagating the Gospel. No other power is authorized or can do it. No government, no nation, no King, no Emperor or diplomatist. They may become the instruments and agencies. Kings may be nursing fathers, queens nursing mothers; but the power of life is the Church of the living God upon the earth—the kingdom of Christ established here in this royal dwelling-place of Him who is the King of kings and Lord of lords. We are His courtiers, His captains, His generals, His admirals, His administrators—we are responsible for the work of His kingdom and its advancement upon the earth.

You may say this is a hard saying; you may ask, Why does God not do the work more rapidly than the Church's slow agency is accomplishing it? The Church's agency has been slow because the Church has not come up to do God's work by the power which God has given her. Agencies for propagating the Gospel must be twofold. The one repre-

sents the power of God, exerted through the grace of the Lord Jesus, going before and accompanying and strengthening every effort. The Church must recognize this power, and go forward according to her capacity to free mankind, or she fails of her duty, and cannot come up to the demand of God.

God might work miracles ; but did you ever reflect on the amount of conversion accomplished by miracles ? Have you ever thought how little converting power was in them ? Let us take a single glance at the history of the results of miracles even where they were necessary for the establishment of the truth. In Egypt what miracle power was displayed ! Flash followed flash, and struck no ray of light into the dark Egyptian mind, or into the mind of Pharaoh that sat upon the throne ; thunder-peal followed after thunder-peal of divine vengeance ; the angel of death careered over the land in all its length and breadth, striking down the eldest born in every house, and in every house there was sorrow, tears, death, and yet no penitence. Miracles governed Israel. As Israel went out, every step, from the first night's journey out of Memphis to the very last upon the shores of the river of Jordan, was marked by a display of the divine power visible to all Israel. Wonder succeeded wonder ; grand displays of the mighty power of God attended the people at every movement of their journey. The pillar of cloud was

a perpetual testimony by day, the pillar of fire was a perpetual luminary by night ; and yet, in spite of all these and of yet grander miracles, when the sea was made to stand apart as though crystallized into glass on the right hand and left as God's people were led forward—or those grander miracles still, when water gushed out of the rock at the command of a sinful man to satisfy God's people, and afterward when on Sinai God's presence was visible in the midst of thunder, lightning, and smoke : all these transcendent miracles were done, and yet what followed ? Out of all the millions that witnessed these miracles there was not a man, woman, or child—not even Moses, the great leader—who could enter into the promised land ; and why ? Because of their unbelief. Do not ask, then, why God should not work miracles for the propagation of His Gospel. A miracle has been wrought once for all ; the last, the greatest and most wonderful—God manifest in the flesh to redeem mankind to himself by his own death upon the cross. And the Holy Ghost, following Christ's crucifixion and ascension, came to convince the world of sin. Why ? “ Because they believed not on me.” That is the secret of it all. The Church of the Lord Jesus is not, after all, a believing Church. It has not, I mean to say, the entire faith in God's promises, in God's power, in Christ's redemption, and in the blood of the Saviour—the

entire faith in this supernatural array of agencies and powers which God is using for the propagation of His own truth.

The Church does not believe enough. Here and there a man believes enough, and such a man will say, I am ready to go to India; another starts up and says, I will go to Bulgaria. Another, in whom the power of faith is strong, says, "If you need a man for China or Japan I will go there." There are believing souls ready to go abroad; and among those who stay at home there is now and then a man who, as he goes on enjoying the good things of this earth, and is protected in his property by the safeguards of our civilization, which draw their strength from the Gospel, will say, "This is not mine, it is God's, and God commands me to use it for the spread of His kingdom and the advancement of His truth."

After all we must admit that the Church has not risen to the height of this great argument, and come to believe in Christ and in the propagation of his kingdom. The disciples could not cast out a devil from a lunatic because of their unbelief. "If ye have faith," said the Saviour, "as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove: and nothing shall be impossible unto you." This is the language of hyperbole, but it means that the highest reach of our

faith cannot be too high. Most of us still see with the eyes of nature, and see no further than we can see in the sphere and atmosphere of nature. We look upon the propagation of missions as upon the expansion of commerce and civilization, and as if there were no higher power employed in the one than in the other. All are, indeed, illustrations of God's power, and we may ask, Why was not commerce sooner developed? why was it not as extensive five thousand years ago as now? God might have ordained it from the beginning, but He left it to the discovery and navigation and the activities of man, so showing that God and man were to be co-workers.

So with all discoveries. Why did not men have gas-light two or three hundred years ago? God Almighty does not make that gas-light; He supplies all the elements of it, and frames the laws, and keeps them in operation, by which it is manufactured and gives us light. It was the work of human industry and persevering efforts. These are analogies which the Church of God dares not to neglect. God is waiting for us to find out our whole duty and go up to the discharge of it, and then His kingdom will triumph, and only then. Oh for faith to take God at His word! a faith like that of Elijah in his Maker. Even amid the opposing hosts of Baal he demanded the fire from heaven! Oh for a faith like that of

Elisha, who could see the cloud as a man's hand afar off, and in it detect the coming shower! In consequence of a want of faith there is a want of holiness. "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Then shall I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee." That is to say, the more faith we have the more love we shall have, the more of Christ's presence, spirit, and power; and the more we are baptized into this love, the more this sacred fire of love purges away and burns out the elements of evil, selfish desires, the more we shall do for the propagation of God's kingdom. Then more and more shall we teach transgressors the way of God, and sinners shall be converted to Him.

Want of self-sacrifice comes of a want of faith. A few are willing to go, and a few of those that stay at home are willing to support those that go; but there is a lamentable want of the spirit of self-sacrifice among us in both these respects in reference to the great demands of the Gospel and the doors that are opened — sacrifice of person as well as means.

The newspapers recently contained an account of a shipwreck on the coast of the Scilly Isles which was very thrilling in all its details. The wreck was seen from the shore, and a number of fishermen

manned the only boat that could be found, and succeeded in reaching the vessel through the breakers with great labor and difficulty, and they brought boat-load after boat-load off until only three or four remained. The storm increased, and the men, being exhausted, lay down upon a rock on the coast as they landed in absolute weariness, and said they could go no more to the wreck. An old man, a Methodist class-leader, a man of seventy or eighty years of age, was standing, with a few others, on the shore, and hearing them declare that they had made the last trip, he prayed, and then said, "If four others will go with me and row, I will steer the boat and bring off the captain and the others that are left on that ship." Four young men started—two of them the old man's sons—and said, "Let us go. You stay upon the rock and pray." And so the boat went, and the old man knelt upon the rock and prayed, and the young men looked back, and, as they saw him still pray, the consciousness that he was there, and belief in his good heart and strong faith, nerved them and stimulated their failing strength, and on they went, breasting wave after wave, and safely reached the ship and brought those upon the wreck to the shore in safety, and then all fell down at the knees of the old man and gave praise to God.

So, brethren, our work and duty lie before us.

There are sinking upon the wreck of heathendom, not three, or four, or five, but millions upon millions of our race. The life-boat is going to and fro, but there is not strength enough ; the hands employed are weary. Men of New York, come ye to the rescue !

VIII.

THE GOSPEL ENOUGH.

If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.—*Luke xvi, 31.*

WE have a sure oracle and rule of life in the word of God, and we have no need to seek any other guidance but that; and yet men are prone, and always have been prone, to forsake the fountain of living water and hew out for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. When God was giving the law it was necessary for Him to warn the people against certain false oracles of the people around them. "Those nations which thou shalt possess hearkened unto observers oftentimes, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do." And so, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, he renews the injunction hundreds of years later: "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony."

These tendencies were not confined to the olden

time: the skeptic now, as then, seeks to excuse his unbelief by complaining of the want of proof; the sinner cheats himself now as he cheated himself then, by the vain pretext that his evil state is owing to the want of means to change it. We are all apt to wish for agencies more potent than the simple means of God's appointment for the conversion of the world, namely, His word expounded by His ministers, and brought to our hearts by the force of His Holy Spirit. We desire to go beyond these simple means and ask, as the Jews asked, for a sign. It is to all such that the sermon to-day, with the text on which it is based, is addressed: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

The proposition of the text is, that those who show themselves unsusceptible to impression from the means presented in the word of God will not be persuaded by any other means, and to develop this proposition is all that we have to do this morning. It is not difficult to prove it. The first argument drawn from the nature of the case would be sufficient if there were none to be found in history. What is the nature of the case? Why, that a spiritual end is to be accomplished, a moral result to be brought about—the purification, regeneration, and sanctification of human nature. How is this to be done? By magic? by signs? by wonders, miracles,

or special interpositions? Nay, the very mention of these, in connection with a moral result, shows us at once the folly and madness of them. If the means employed by the Divine Being for the accomplishment of this moral purpose of His were to be irresistible in their force upon the intellect, alarming, perhaps, and stupefying the mind, while at the same time impressing it, what would become of the morality of the change in and of itself? It would be a mechanical and not a moral one. It is essential to the state of probation not so much that certain virtuous acts should be done, as that a certain disposition should be formed in the agent toward virtue, goodness, and truth. Good acts may be brought about by an irresistible force, and good opinions may be brought about by irresistible evidence, the mind being so constituted as to obey irresistible evidence; but there would be no discipline, no culture of the moral nature, no testing of the individual, nothing of the character of probation whatsoever; there would be none of the obedience of sons, loving and gentle, turning to the Father and saying, "As thou hast commanded so I will obey." No, but all of us would obey as the slaves obey under the lash of the task-master; obey as the soldier obeys under a despotism that he dare not for a single moment forget; obey as the stars obey, without haste and without rest, like mere machines. No, brethren, there cannot be

any *irresistible* influence, or teaching, or example in the propagation of Christianity. Moral means alone are fitting for the accomplishment of spiritual ends, the propagation of a spiritual religion.

In the second place, the necessary moral means are presented for us in the word of God, which furnishes us adequate knowledge of the relations between God and man, and adequate laws to regulate all these relations, as well as adequate motives to obey these laws. What more is necessary? The *knowledge* that we may know what is to be done; the *law* that we may know the obligation for the doing of it; the *motives* that we may be left without excuse if we do not obey. What more is required? It furnishes adequate motives to obedience, for it shows us what we are as sinners, our incapacity to do good, our utter helplessness in and of ourselves, and, still more, that there is guilt in this condition, and that this guilt will some day bring its penalty. It shows us the sin, the guilt, the peril, in our wretched humanity, as well as the way to escape, pointing us to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.

When the word of God comes with this exhibition of the law, this exhibition of the doom, and this exhibition of the Saviour, is any thing else needed? Are any other means necessary? Are they necessary for your individual mind? If you are resisting

still, it is not because the means are not adequate. No. "Ye *will* not come unto me," says Christ to some of the rebellious ones; "ye will not come unto me that ye may have life." It is because the will is corrupt, and not the means insufficient; because you do not want to be saved, not because the way of salvation is not open.

"If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Do not speak of the evidence of Christianity being inadequate. Have you ever tried it? There is here a celestial chemistry which no man can learn who does not go into the laboratory himself, and use his own crucible and his own fire. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." In the same spirit was Christ's affecting lamentation over Jerusalem: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." Christ himself, with that all-embracing love of his, with that mighty, infinite heart of his, palpitating in every fibre with a tender affection for that beloved Jerusalem, could not bring the Jews to him because they *would not*. With all his wealth of love, and wealth of miracle; with all his displays of benevolence and manifestations of divine power, it was still a failure;

Jerusalem would not come, and Christ would not compel her.

I think, then, it is sufficiently shown, from the nature of the case, that the means presented in the word of God are the right means, and, being the right means, they are the adequate means ; and that those who do not receive these means, and are unwilling to listen to the Gospel simply as presented, have no excuse in their inadequacy or unfitness. But let us turn to the proof from all history upon this point. The question is whether, in the failure of ordinary means to rouse a man's attention, miraculous means would be efficacious or not. Perhaps you may have thought, as many a man does, "If I had lived in those days, and seen Christ walking with his disciples, healing the sick and raising the dead, and stood by him when he wrought those miracles among the Jews, my heart would have been softened, and I should have yielded to him." You may be saying even to-day in your heart, "All this is very well ; and if I could be satisfied of these miracles that are recorded in the word of God, I would believe in Christianity and act up to it." O fool ! as if the grandest of all miracles was not this religion itself ! as if the grandest of all works was not the change of a sinful nature into harmony with the law of God ! as if the every-day life of Christianity were not a greater wonder than an occa-

sional display of divine power! The every-day course of God's law is sublimer than its disturbance. To see the grand manifestations of a people's will under the forms of law, to see a nation go on, century after century, in order, peace, and harmony, under a form of government, be it monarchical, republican, or other, provided it be an expression of the people's will, with the regular functions of the law duly administered, and all the ordinances of the government faithfully carried out—a vast society held together for generation after generation without jar or tumult—what could be sublimer than this? And if, after hundreds of years, a bad king or a bad administration should come, and the people determine that all this should change, and rise up suddenly, it may be, in the night, and without using the ordinary means by which the popular will had been carried out, without the aid of any intermediate functionaries, judicial administrators, or whatever you may choose to call them—when the people rise and say, “This state of things must not be, this man must go down”—men stand aghast, and call it revolution; and these are the eras and epochs of humanity. Yet it is grander to see the machine working on simply, serenely, and consistently, age after age, than to see this sudden miracle of the very same power working without the forms of law. And so it is with miracles. The order of nature preserved for

generation after generation, the spheres keeping up the harmony of their perpetual music, and going on in their sublime orbits as God placed them in the beginning, is a grander sight than the sudden eruption of Vesuvius or a sudden intervention of God by miracle. It is God in both cases : God in the first case working on through the ages according to laws which he has implanted in nature, and the systems of the universe as he made them ; God in the other case working suddenly by his own sovereignty, without any such intermediate intervention of the law. That is all the difference : God in the regular order, and God in what we call the miracle. And yet men, who will not be persuaded by the regular order of the Divine administration that there is a God, say, "Only let this order be disturbed and we will believe." As if men who deny that there is any proper sovereignty of the people, and wait until some outbreak of popular fury demonstrates that there is, should believe by seeing its irregular exercise !

You cannot have miracles ; but even if you could, you would not be persuaded by them if your heart and will were opposed to God's truth. How was it with the very miracles presupposed in the text ? Let us appeal to one single instance in the case of Lazarus. The man Lazarus was raised from the dead by Jesus Christ himself. He stood by the grave, and there, with the family of Lazarus, were

gathered certain Jews that were susceptible of receiving an impression, and whose hearts were already open to the Word of God—such as believed in Moses and the prophets ; and with them still others were gathered, adherents of the scribes and the Pharisees, full of prejudice, and bitter and hardened in their hearts ; and how was it then ? They came together, and Christ, in the might of his divine power, uttered but one word, and life came back to the corpse, and he sat up in his tomb, and came forth in his grave-clothes, and was seen by his friends and by those believing Jews, as well as by those others, the Pharisees and Sadducees, and what was the result ? The Pharisees, we are told, came together and counseled, and said, “What shall we do ? This man doeth many miracles.” The end of it was, that from that very day forth they took counsel together how they might put him to death. They refused to believe Moses and the prophets, and when this grandest of signs—for the resurrection of a man from the dead is the grandest of miracles—was wrought before them, what was the result ? The redoubling of their hatred, an outburst of frantic fury, and plotting and planning to destroy the life of the Life-giver. Not satisfied with that, a very few days after they were determined that this new example should not last ; that this specimen of life put “under the ribs of death” should not walk about

and tempt men to believe, and they said, "This Lazarus must die," and they took counsel to put him to death, for fear the Jews should believe on Jesus. Thus a man raised from the dead confirmed only those ready to believe, and hardened and made still more perverse those that would not listen.

And now for the other example, the example of Christ himself. He died and rose again, and what was the effect of that resurrection? Take the case of the Roman soldiers put to guard the tomb—stern, hard men, so disciplined that there never was a case known of one of them sleeping on his post. Their discipline was the strictest ever known before that period or since. They witnessed the resurrection of Jesus; they saw the incipient movements, the opening of the grave and rolling away of the stone, and saw the angel with the lightning face and raiment white as snow; they saw the sudden springing of the dead man to life again; they saw, and as they saw they trembled; and these strong, mail-clad soldiers became as dead men. "Oh," we shall say, "now they believe; here is the evidence; these shall be the first converts from the Roman army, and it shall come by and by in troops to listen to them." The very next day these men, who, under the first shock of the miracle trembled like aspens, sold their testimony for a piece of gold, and were willing to

declare that men stole him away while they slept. And as for the scribes and Pharisees, the opponents of Jesus, this crowning miracle of the resurrection only redoubled their hatred.

It may be noticed that men who reject the Scripture are the most ready of all men to accept pretended revelations. Oh how we all yearn for revelations! When we turn from those that God has made in his kindness how ready we are to believe false oracles! Modern Spiritualism is an evidence of the fact. Men who do not believe the word of God at all come, nervous as a sick child, to listen for a sound from the other world. The prophet had been with Saul, and striven for years and years to teach him, and he shut his ears and would not listen; but when Samuel was dead he must send for the Witch of Endor to see if he could not get the dead man up to give him the very information he might have gathered from his living lips. He was stunned for a moment, but forgot all the next day, rushing to the battle, and then to suicide—too often the end of those who seek these wizards who peep and mutter. It is the very essence of unbelief to give that credence to false oracles which they deny to God. Caligula, who mocked at the name of the gods, trembled when it thundered, and covered himself in his bed until the dread scene should pass by. The devil may not tempt you to imitate the cruelty of Caligula,

but will find it easier to tempt you to imitate his mingled skepticism and cowardice.

And now with reference to our own personal life and activity. Let us take this lesson to heart, and use no other weapon than He has provided. You are a soldier of His, and if you attempt to use any weapon other than the sword of the Spirit, no matter how terrible it may seem, or likely to do execution, the end of it will be that the recoil will hurt yourself. Do not attempt to impose upon any one with pious frauds. There was a time when men thought that cheating was a proper way to serve God. But the preaching of his word, the exhibition of his law, the proclamation of his truth, the cross of Jesus Christ—these are the simple means for Christian teaching and the propagation of the Gospel which God provides ; let us not dare to go beyond them. There is always a reaction from the use of improper means. Twelve years ago a large part of the people of certain districts of this country were alarmed at the supposed near approach of the millennium. The people who got up this story were deluded, miserably deluded, and perhaps on that account excusable, many of them ; but there was no excuse, and never will be, for making use of a delusion like that for the propagation of the Gospel. I do not say that a state of mind produced by such means may not be seized to urge home Gospel truths ; but the man who

will undertake to make use of the millennium tendency to convert souls by it runs into a snare. There is no use seeking to make impressions on people by miracles, or by prophecies of the near approach of the millennium. It makes no difference to you or me whether the millennium comes now or ten thousand years hence. Our duty is to make use of present advantages : of this blessed Sabbath-day ; to use it to His glory according to His law, listening to His word, and doing the work it puts upon us.

And so in regard to your individual conversion. Use the means afforded ; wait for no marvelous influences. Ten chances, a hundred chances to one you will never feel them. God's means are just, and he will not use any other. I do not say that an alarming calamity may not startle you to seek after the truth ; but you will find the means are still the same as to-day, "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Why should you wait for calamity before seeking after God ? Why not now—in your prosperity, in the flush and hey-day of your youth and vigorous manhood, while your mind is strong, and your body is able to do the very best work for God—why not exclaim, "Here, Lord, I am ; take me ; make me thine forever ?" Listen to the prophets ; listen, above all, to Christ and His apostles ; take His gentle reproofs and sweet and kind invitations ; obey His gracious command ;

come to Him and be saved. For, if you hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will you be persuaded though one should rise from the dead.

Nay, the means which God uses, instead of becoming greater in relation to you, will rather become less every day. The appeal, founded upon the word of God, which ten years ago would have startled you, does not startle you now. The sermon which would then have made you prick up your ears, and in your heart determine to seek and obey God, that sermon passes idly by you now. The prayers of your parents, which ten or fifteen years ago you remembered with so much tenderness, are forgotten now. The law of God is the same, the promises of God the same, the power of Christ's cross the same; the glory of heaven is the same, the darkness and torture of hell the same. But you are changed; you have become hardened; you have less susceptibility to religious impressions, less of the Spirit of God, less of the religious element, less prospect of salvation. And so it will go on, unless you yield to God's mercy, and obey His Spirit, and say, "I yield; the evidence is enough; the means are enough; I have had opportunities enough, and now I will turn to God and do His will."

IX.

THE PASTOR'S JOY.

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth,
3 John 4.

To understand these words, and their application in the case of John, we must remember that John was a Christian Pastor. He here speaks of his children, referring first, doubtless, to those who had been converted under his preaching, and then to those attending upon his ministry. The words are apt and fitting in the case of every true and faithful minister of the Lord Jesus. The relations between the Pastor and his flock are intimate relations ; they are personal relations as well as official, and they are relations, too, quite different from the ordinary relations of men to each other in society. The Pastor is the teacher of the flock, not the priest of the flock ; not their intercessor with God, not their mediator. As I have often said in this place, so now I say again—for the truth on this point cannot be too frequently repeated—whenever a man comes to you professing to be a priest, or to stand between you and God in any sense whatever, distrust and doubt

that man. The Christian Pastor is a teacher, and guide, and ruler of the flock, in a certain sense ; in the very strongest sense, however, he is a minister of the flock ; that is to say, a servant of the flock. So, too, he is a teacher who does not volunteer his services. He is called of God to his work of the ministry ; called to be the witness of God, through His Church, through His providence, through His Spirit speaking to him and urging him to go forth and speak to the people ; and the people agree to this. It is every man's duty to propagate the Gospel. But not every man can teach ; not every man can devote his life to the study of the word of God. There are a great many duties to be discharged, a great deal of work to be done : farms to be tilled, commerce to be carried on, trade to be pursued—these are necessary to the very existence of society. There are secular studies and pursuits ; the most of mankind must be busy with these, and some must be set apart from the rest for the study of God's word and Gospel. And this theory of the relation between the Pastor and the flock is, I think, a very intelligible one. Further, the minister is not a mere teacher of human knowledge, but of divine knowledge. “We come to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.” Now, if all this be true, there can be nothing mercenary in the relation between the Pastor and the flock ; if there is, the relation is a false one.

he man who really feels himself called to preach the Gospel, if he have a true heart, gives up the ordinary prizes of human life, and ought to give them up. He should be supported by the people, it is true, and relieved from all anxiety as to secular concerns ; supported decently, in proportion to the condition and capacity of his people. But the true minister of the Gospel gives up the ordinary prizes of life. The relations between the preacher and the people are founded upon kindness and love, and not upon ambition or money-making ; otherwise the text would have no aptness in its relation to a preacher of the Gospel. The ordinary prizes of life to men of great talent are very great—prizes of wealth, of distinction, position, and what not. You all know these things very well. Some of you have achieved them in your own particular lines. As merchants, you may live as the princes of Tyre lived of old, and have control of all things that money can give. I, as a minister of the Gospel, give up the chance of this ; it cannot be mine. I do not want it to be mine ; I have other things to think of. Not that you are wrong, but I would be wrong if I pursued the same objects. A Christian minister must make up his mind in the beginning that these are not for him. He may gain prizes in reputation and fame, because in this thing, as in all other things, the ordinary laws of human nature must have their way ;

those men who have in them the elements of power, talent, and genius, will stand above their fellows. But a minister of the Gospel dare not, if he be a true man, look at these things as his reward—the prize toward which he is aiming. If a true man he can say to his flock in earnest, “I want not yours, but you ; I come among you for your good, and because my own soul cannot be saved unless I do ; because God has put a woe upon me if I preach not the Gospel ; because I have a mission of God to testify to you the Gospel of Christ.” To such a man the words of my text are most fitting and beautiful, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” We have, then, in this text the sources of the faithful minister’s highest joy.

There is a great deal of beauty in this use of the term children ; it was especially beautiful in the mouth of the Apostle John. You remember how lovely and beautiful his character was ; how he stands out among the other apostles as the very type of true tenderness, gentleness, and affection. Paul had his great points, his noble energy and dauntless fidelity, but must yield to John in those lovelier attributes—attributes which have become so strongly characteristic of John’s history that when we speak of a man unusually tender and affectionate we say his character was John-like. It is said that in the old age of this apostle—he lived to be a hundred

years old, some accounts say a hundred and five, thus surviving the storms of the stormiest period of the Christian Church—he used to be carried into the church Sunday after Sunday, and, when he could preach to his congregation no more, he would, at the conclusion of the services, raise up his hands, and give the same simple injunction, “My little children, love one another.” The story is no doubt true, and it is perfectly characteristic of the beautiful life and writings of this apostle.

The whole of the three epistles of John seem to have just these two thoughts, with various modifications—truth and love. Upon these two poles, as it were, in the mind of the apostle, his mind revolved—truth and love. This epistle was written when he was perhaps ninety years of age. Looking over his whole life, having tested all that life had to give of trial on the one hand, and joy and triumph on the other, after having seen life in almost every possible phase and in the most splendid cities in the world, he says, “My greatest joy is to hear that my children walk in truth.” “My children,” that is to say, those that have been brought into the Church by my preaching, and have been trained by me as a father in the Gospel in the way of everlasting life. “My greatest joy”—as a minister of the Gospel, so can every true man say that stands to preach the Gospel, is—what? The applause of my hearers?

the text does not say that ; the number of my hearers ? the text does not say that ; the wealth and earthly possessions of my hearers ? the text does not say that. Not that these things are in themselves bad—I do not say so ; not that it is bad in a preacher to get the applause of his audience ; it is essential that he should get the ear of those who hear him, and it is proper, in the language of Ecclesiastes, to find out “acceptable words,” so that people may be glad to listen to him when he unfolds the word of God. “My greatest joy,” says John the eloquent, who, before Chrysostom, might have been called the golden-mouthed, upon whose teachings the world hangs to this day as the most beautiful the Bible contains, “is”—not the applause of listening multitudes, but—“to hear that my children walk in truth.” The true minister of the Gospel is called of God to preach His Gospel wherever he can preach it ; whether it be in the grandest edifices erected for the worship of Almighty God, or in the humblest, or in no edifice at all ; in the woods, at the camp-meeting, or in the log-hut of some remote country district. The same thought is at the bottom of the preacher’s effort—his duty to his people, and the work he has to do in testifying the Gospel of the grace of God, and trying to bring them to walk in the truth. “I have no greater joy than”—that my church be filled ? my congregation respectable ? my

people wealthy? Nothing of all this ; there is no such word in the whole Bible. Let these things come if they will, but not as the object of search. It is the glory of this Gospel that it is as fit for the poorest as for the richest ; that in the huts of poverty, as in the palaces of kings, these great truths are the same. That is a fine anecdote related of Louis XIV and Massillon — when the latter had preached a grand sermon, and some one remarked upon it to the king, he replied, “I think not of that man ; but whenever I listen to him he makes me think of my soul and eternity.”

What does it mean, this walking in truth? I have before expounded the term “walk” as implying a habit of life. In the eighth chapter of the Romans we read of “walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” It means a habit of life, a continued tendency of manners, a mode of thought and feeling. It has more than one meaning, more than one application. For one thing, it means the knowledge of the outward, substantial body of truth, the Gospel of the grace of God, and that Jesus Christ is our Saviour.; or, as John says in the first of these small epistles which he wrote, “We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.”

And again in the second chapter of First John, "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" What a terribly expressive interrogation that is—unbelief in Christ being the master sin, as I have told you so often. The very essence of all falsehood and all untruth is found to be this very same unbelief in Christ, summing it all up into this one thing, that he that denieth Christ is the Antichrist, is a liar, and there are no other liars. "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. Let that therefore abide in you, which you have heard from the beginning."

To walk in the truth is to acknowledge Christ as a Saviour, to receive him as a Redeemer and source of all goodness and truth, to seek in him for all virtue, all power. A love of Christ and God in Christ: that is the substance of the doctrine of the Gospel; it runs out into various branches—justification, sanctification, adoption, regeneration—but all these have their roots and ground in this, the belief of my soul in Jesus Christ as my Saviour; that I hang upon him for the pardon of my sins, and trust in him for the purification of my life, seeking by continual intimacy with him to grow in grace and in the knowledge of

his truth. This is the doctrine of the Gospel of the Word of God. My children, do you walk in this truth? Have you mastered all this wonderful mystery of God manifest in the flesh?

The outward doctrines of the Gospel, then, are part of the truth which you are to keep and cherish; it is invaluable as a possession, this deposit of truth which God has given to his Church, and each man may have it for a possession. Oh how certain, how rich, how true a possession beyond all others is the truth that a man holds! There is no other possession after all but those things which belong to our minds and hearts. These are the only things which we really possess. I do not possess my house, though I have a title-deed of it; I call it mine. I have some lands perhaps, I do not possess them. I have the use of them for a time, but soon I shall be buried in six feet of earth. Men may call me a millionaire; what difference does it make? I cannot carry these things beyond the grave. My possessions, those things which death cannot take from me, which neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor any other creature shall be able to separate me from—what are those things? The truth of God, the love of God, the character that I have, not my reputation, but my inward character, founded upon my knowledge of God and relationship to Jesus Christ—these are mine;

you cannot take me from them, the grave cannot separate me from them, they will go with me into the other world, and they shall be my everlasting treasure there. These are the gold and jewels of that better kingdom—the everlasting ornaments which never, never fade.

But to walk in the truth implies more than this—it implies a heart-felt enjoyment and possession of the truth, not merely in the intellect, but in the heart. It is quite possible for the mind to be furnished with the formulas of the truth while the heart has no share in it; to hold the truth and hold it in unrighteousness. And the general law is that the outward form of truth does not remain long in the mind of that man who does not allow it to go into his heart, or make use of it for the purification of his nature. It is with this as with secular knowledge; the analogies of nature are wonderful all the way through. How is it with yourselves? You learn a mathematical formula, the most simple in arithmetic or the most complicated in the highest calculus. Suppose it is that two and two make four; if you do not take that truth and apply it constantly in your daily pursuits, if you let it remain as a barren doctrinal statement, you forget it. You have learned a hundred lessons, which have passed through your mind as water through a sieve and never taken hold upon your habits or your heart. The human mind

is not a mere box to be filled, as we stuff a chest, with papers. It is only those lessons which are taken hold of by the heart and incorporated into the activities of the man in some way—either in the conduct of his business, trade, or profession, or in the whole conduct of his life, and become part and parcel of the man himself, which are substantial and unchanging truths for him.

The love of the truth is a richer possession than the actual truth itself, because it will lead you to the truth and keep you in it ; but if you hold the truth without loving it, the end will be that you will lose even that possession. If you have the doctrine that Christ is the Saviour of men, make use of it by having Christ for your own Saviour ; if you have the doctrine of sanctification, make use of it by getting your own soul cleansed from sin and living in the purity of holiness. The truth at once seeks to turn itself into action, and all truth some day or another gets itself translated into an obvious and outward fact. It is the knowledge of this that strengthens the man of science in researches apparently the most remote from all practical utility. And yet the truly scientific man is the most practical man in the world. The man making analysis after analysis among gases and bits of clay, though ignorant people might suppose him crazed, is the most eminently practical man in the world. You will see by

and by the fruits of his research in some new element that contributes vastly to the comforts of human life. Truth forces itself out into practice, and if it be not true for you individually, you have not held the truth honestly, and are not walking in the truth as you ought to do. The truth comes into practice because it seeks obedience. She enters my soul and yours as a queen, to rule there, not to obey. We kneel to her and obey her if we are true-hearted, while she sits there in her queenly robe and diadem of immortal gems. And while we kneel to no other monarch we are safe ; and not only that, but we are rich, for she does not sit very long ruling alone, but takes those gems of hers, those costly robes, and gives them to her subjects, surrounding them with all the blessings she can dispense. God himself has made obedience the test of truth. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

The last chapter of the Revelation places this matter in the clearest light : in giving a list of those shut out of the eternal city, "without," says the book, "are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters ;" and, when we think we have got to the acme of all possible sinfulness, we read, "and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie," as if that were the summing up of all transgression. And so it is. If there be no truth in a man there

is no basis on which you can work with him ; there can be no faith where there is no truth, either in society or in trade, for upon truthfulness all confidence depends. If there be no truth in a man we can do nothing with him, and he is only fit to be cast out with dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, for he is as bad as any of them ; the very bottom that ought to sustain the fabric of virtue is gone. It is a great thing, which you cannot too much fix in your minds, that your personal veracity is a sure type and test of your whole character. Do not tell a lie, because to do so is to crucify your best nature before God ; for this is cutting off the very roots of all faith that you can have in yourselves, or that other men can have in you. Never tell a lie about any thing ; teach your children this first and last lesson. " I ask no greater joy than that my children walk in the truth." " Woe upon a lie ;" it comforts not the soul like the true spoken word ; it comforts not but tortures him that utters it. A lie is a fearful thing, and always brings back its curse to him that utters it. The South Sea Islanders have a weapon which they cast with such skill that it comes back to the very spot from which it is thrown ; and in the hands of an inexperienced man it sometimes comes back so crushingly as to destroy. And so do the poisoned arrows which the liar sends forth come back, repulsed

by the shield of Almighty God, to poison his own soul. For God's sake walk in the truth, even in the smallest details of life, in your daily intercourse with men, in your own family. Do not promise your child to do a thing and then not do it ; do not tell your child a thing that is not true and let him think it is true.

“To thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.”

Truthfulness, what a glorious thing it is ! What has made Thomas Carlyle so great a man, the ruler, as it were, and inspirer of so many young minds ? The essence of that man's hold upon minds is that he has, or at least seems to have, a powerful instinctive reverence for the truth, and preaches it on every page of his books, showing an invincible hatred of all falsehoods and shams. What a glorious thing truthfulness of life is when we find it standing out in history ! The prince who befriended Luther, and took for his motto, “The word of God abideth forever,” and had the initials of the motto put upon his shields and on the harness of his horses and the livery of his servants, acted upon it in his court and his family, satisfied that, whatever other things pass away, this one thing is true, “the word of the Lord abideth forever.” When a man gets such a great truth as that impressed upon him and lives upon it, he walks in truth, because

truth is the inspiration of his life. To walk in the truth, to avoid every thing like pretending to be what we are not, is the highest type of human character. Here again, to my children in the Gospel, and particularly to the young people, I put this as one of your highest aims—always seem to be what you are, and do not try to seem to be what you are not. There is no greater source of discomfort and annoyance in private life than that of trying to be a little different from what we are. Seeming to be rich when we are not rich—what a ghastly, horrible life is this! Trying for years and years to “keep up appearances,” as it is called; can you imagine any thing more terrible than this? The outward show of upholstery, furniture of plush and velvet, while a man may be a bankrupt and a beggar; what a miserable wretch! and what he must suffer every day and every hour!

The man who begins life on false appearances is a type of those who do not take the truth of God into their hearts and work it out continually. They seem to be rich in good works, all the while knowing that they are bankrupt. The keeping up of appearances in this world will all soon be over, but the keeping up of spiritual appearances is everlasting damnation. A great deal of the misery of our social life in this city of New York comes from the perpetual aiming to be what we are not, and aping something that we

ought not to imitate at all. A great deal of our ordinary every-day walking is walking not merely upon treacherous ashes, but, I had almost said, upon no ashes at all. Take one of the splendid houses in Fifth Avenue, and in passing along you will suppose here are magnificent structures, nobly planned and strongly built, of perpetually enduring stone. My poor friend, there is nothing but veneering of brown-stone there. And so in our architecture generally, we make grand outward displays that look as if they would stand perpetually, when they are only lath and plaster. The structure of a life that subsists on seeming for reality cannot be honest at bottom.

And now what is the lesson of the text? It is that we walk in the truth; that we cherish it in our lives, in our habits, in the way in which we bring up our families, and in all our ways endeavor, according to God's laws, to walk in His simple truth.

And now I speak feelingly of my relation to this flock, and especially to the younger members and younger converts in it. Before long I shall be leaving you, and this pulpit be occupied by another Pastor; but when that time comes I shall long to know if these children of mine are walking in the truth, building up a pure, substantial character, endeavoring to be honest men and godly women, seeking to

keep love to God in their hearts, and to live in the truth and knowledge of God, continually adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour. Do not let yourselves be drawn away by a false world, which will soon be at an end for you and for me. The only perpetual possession is this truth ; treasure it up in your minds and hearts and work it out in your lives. If you find society false and hollow, do not let it affect you ; act no falsehoods in manner, in dress, in equipage, in trade.

To the Christian parent my text comes with beauty and aptness. Is there nothing you desire for your own children so earnestly as that they walk in the truth ? Do you wish it to-day ? Most assuredly you ought, if you are a Christian parent and your heart is filled with the love of God. Ask yourselves whether it has already been so ? whether you have not cherished for them wealth, distinction, social position, more than you have the desire that they should walk in the truth. Can you say that you have been as earnest for the salvation of your children's souls as about their education, and that they should make a figure in society and do well in the world ? Let not Satan thus deceive, let not the world thus enslave you ; but seek for yourselves and your children that truth which is an everlasting possession, and say for them, as I say for you, "I have no greater joy than this, to hear that my

children walk in truth ;" that this truth should be truth of doctrine—that they should know their relation to God through Christ ; to love truth above all other things, and that their whole conduct and all their ways should be regulated by the love of God.

X.

CHURCH FELLOWSHIP.

That there should be no schism in the body ; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.—1 *Cor. xii*, 25, 26.

THE word Church is ambiguous from the two meanings attached to it, which, if confounded together, produce necessarily perplexity and confusion. The Church is twofold, according to the statements of the New Testament: the visible Church and the catholic Church—the latter being the universal Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, including all believers in all lands, in all communities, under all possible forms. All true believers, however differing from each other in outward form, usages, and ceremonies, are members of the catholic Church. So in the creed which we all subscribe to as the simplest embodiment of Christianity—in that creed, rightly named the Apostles', we avow our belief in "the holy catholic Church, and in the communion of saints." In expressing that belief we express our

belief in that kingdom which is to be manifest upon the earth—which is to be seen, however, in its complete and perfect state only after the earth shall have become in full possession of Christ. This Church, to which the promises of God are given in their fullest extent—which is emphatically the body of Christ, and includes all the branches of the militant Church on earth, and shall hereafter include all those who shall finally triumph and become part of God's Church in heaven—this catholic Church, being invisible, is not and cannot be known as such in any one body upon the earth ; God alone knows the heart, and he alone knows whether men professing to be his disciples are really so ; whether you who sit before me and I who preach to you are honest people or hypocrites. It is not for me to judge you, nor for you to judge me, except so far as the outward actions of our lives show what we are.

There may be growing side by side with the richest virtues of the Christian life the rankest vices that degrade humanity. So our Saviour, illustrating His doctrine in the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew, in which the whole theory and history of the Church are set forth, declares that the kingdom of God is a leaven hid in meal, which goes on gradually developing itself, and permeating the meal more and more, until the whole mass is filled. Again He compares it to a grain of mustard-seed,

which germinates according to the law of its nature, and becomes at last a great tree, filling all the air with its branches so that the birds of the air find a refuge in its shade. Again, it is like wheat which a man sows in the field ; scattered by the careful hand of the husbandman, it comes up according to its nature, and produces fruit ; at the same time tares, sown by the enemy while the man slept, come up, so close an imitation and perfect counterfeit that they must be grown up and fully matured before their real character can be known.

All these parables illustrate the character and nature of the Church of God. In the one class of parables the whole Church is spoken of ; that Church which is to go on from conquest to conquest until at last every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father ; that invisible Church to which, if we are true Protestants and Christians, we all cling, loving it none the less that it is invisible, that it has no proud hierarchy, sways no material sword, aims at no outward dominion ; that Church of the Lord Jesus, his kingdom and royal dwelling-place, which has stood thus far and shall stand forever ; for the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. But the visible Church is sometimes evidently advancing, sometimes apparently going back again. The kingdom is founded upon the earth and among men, and

although there is one point of difference between it and earthly things, there are others of likeness. In the visible Church there have been at all times, and there probably will be till the millenium, tares as well as wheat. Yet the kingdom of God is a divine idea, and as such is sure to be realized. Though it may appear to die out, there is always a remnant left ; there are always so many righteous men who do not bow the knee to Baal ; there is always the leaven that shall at last leaven the whole lump.

What are the object and the value of the privileges of this visible Church ? What are the duties of its members ? It is to answer these questions that we shall address ourselves briefly this morning,

First, as to the value of the privileges of the Church ; and,

Second, as to the duties of those who are members of this Church.

The privileges are not what some men suppose them to be—what even the mass of mankind for a long series of ages supposed them to be. The Church of God is typified as a kingdom, but it is not an earthly kingdom. The very temptation to which Christ, the founder, was subjected upon the mountain was that he should endeavor to make His kingdom an earthly one. How his disciples longed that he should ! They went on from year to year looking

for some manifestation of this intention, and hoping the day should come when he would be King of Israel. Satan took him up into an exceeding high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory thereof, and said unto him, "All these will I give unto thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." You know how the offer was repelled by Him upon whom no stain of sin ever rested. But the temptation has been reproduced in many an age since in the history of the Church, and she has not rejected it as Christ did. When the imperial dignity rested for the first time upon a Christian then was the temptation successful. For generation after generation, age after age, was this temptation presented to the Church—now repelled, now accepted—until at last it appeared as if every-where power was in the hands of the Church, and there were enthroned one man who held the consciences of all others in his hand. The building up of the Roman Catholic Church was one of the grandest achievements of human intellect in all ages ; of human intellect assisted by the devil—for it took *him*, with all his years of experience, to build up that glorious and stupendous fabric : it was built upon a sham, and founded upon sands. The bargain was struck. "All these things will I give unto thee." The power and grandeur of Italy, the intellect and activity of France, the majesty and might of Spain,

the solidity and wealth of Germany, all broad and vast Europe was offered to the Church if the Church would only fall down and worship. I say it not in bitterness or anger, but in sorrow and humiliation, this was the bargain, and this the result.

The Church is not a great corporation with magical powers, into which, if a man enter, he is saved. The Church of Jesus Christ, according to the simple definition of our own creed, is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered, according to Christ's ordinance. This is the visible Church of God. It includes individual congregations, its extent being unlimited except by the limits of the habitable globe, for in the parable of the tares Christ tells us the field is the world. The Church and the world are to be co-extensive.

The object of communion is not the attainment of some magical and mystical benefit derived from being in connection with the Church. The mere being in the Church does not protect a man in and of itself, and apart from the use of its privileges and means of grace. What are these privileges? "And he gave some, apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ : till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the

knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," as we read in the Ephesians. What are the ends of the Church? It is for *edification* that Christian men are gathered, Christian societies founded, and the Christian Church diffused from neighborhood to neighborhood until it overruns the world. It is for our personal, mutual, common edification as members of the Church—the Christian man rising up into the fulness of the stature of Christ.

How is this edification to be gained in the Church? What special advantages does the Church afford by its communion? In the first place it affords us the use of the means of grace given to the Church, and by the Church to us. These means of grace are spoken of in the ordinances of our own Church. They are, "The public worship of God; the ministry of the word, either read or expounded; the Supper of the Lord; family and private prayer; searching the Scriptures; fasting or abstinence." And of all who enter the Church it is expected that they have a desire for salvation, to "shun evil and do good."

Public worship is the first privilege. That we worship God together—is it not a privilege? What a privilege it is for us to be gathered this morning in this temple, calm, quiet, peaceful as it is, and commune together with songs of thanksgiving, and

have our hearts uplifted in prayer to God, and listen to His most holy word! There is something elevating in the very conception of such an assemblage. You are not bound to be here; you are getting no earthly gain by coming here week after week thus to commune together. Why do you come? Why are you here? I come, you will say, because I cannot stay away; I come because my heart yearns for the communion of saints, because I feel that in this blessed fellowship with the saints of God, joining in their anthems of praise and worship, and uniting in common prayer, and listening with them to the voice of the minister setting forth God's Gospel, my spiritual life is strengthened, and I can say with the Psalmist, "A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand!" Or you may say, I come because I dare not stay away, because it is my duty to worship, and because I feel condemned if I do not. Well, I rejoice that you come even for this reason; but the very fact that you come with this sense upon you, and this only, shows that you are not fully up to the Gospel standard, you do not fully enjoy the worship of God. You come because you cannot stay away. You admit a sense of duty, and attempt to live up to it, but you are not up to the measure of the stature of Christ. But you will ask, Is this a special privilege of the Church, to come and unite in this worship? Cannot all persons come and unite in this worship?

Unquestionably that is true, and part of the worship is arranged for the benefit of those who do not belong to the Church. If they will join in our prayer and listen to our worship they are welcome. What special advantage, then, you may say, is there in my being a member of the Church?—How long will these privileges last for you or sinners? How many churches would be open for worship if there were no members? How would this church have been here if there had not been men to push on this and other enterprises for the benefit of God and his kingdom? It is because there are Churches enjoying an organic existence, having a corporate life, that these privileges exist, that this church stands. This house is open because the Church exists. The public worship of God depends upon the existence of the Church.

There are other services included in this ordinance—special meetings for the edification of the body of believers—which are not open to the public at large nor intended for their benefit. There is the class-meeting as a special means of grace, a social means of grace, which, as far as it is peculiar to us, affords the members of the Church a special and peculiar advantage—the meeting for Christian communion and confession, in which the social and religious virtues can and ought to be closely cemented and largely developed. Does the Church make attendance upon these meetings obligatory? you will ask,

and you may say, you have no right to make any such rule as this. I am not so sure about that; let us look at it. The Church enjoins upon you to attend public worship; that is one of the laws of the Church, and if you are found absenting yourself from public worship Sunday after Sunday, month after month, and year after year, the Church will bring her Discipline to bear upon you for this violation of her laws, and, if you persist in neglecting public worship, you will be punished by admonition or expulsion. The same will be the case if you persist in neglecting the Lord's Supper. What right has the Church to do this? You may say the Scriptures provide for them, and declare that we must do these things. The Scriptures do not declare that you must come into a place like this and worship in these forms. The Scriptures declare nothing as to the manner in which these duties are to be discharged; nor in regard to the communion, that it shall be held once a month, or once a year, or once in five years; nothing specific is laid down about it. But the Church enjoins certain duties of public worship and communion, and is allowed to hold her members up to that standard. There is nothing wrong or arbitrary in this. The Church provides that these duties shall be performed in a certain way, and that class-meetings shall be held in a certain way, just as she provides that public worship shall be done in a

certain way, and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper observed in a certain way and at certain times. If these be right, the Church has a right to make attendance upon any form of devotion compulsory which can be considered carrying out the will of God. The Church never says strictly that if you are not in your place in church every Sunday morning you shall be excluded, or unless you attend communion once a month or class-meeting once a week you shall be expelled. There is no such strictness as this about any of the rules of the Church, because such strictness would not be in accordance with the example of Christ and his apostles ; their example was forbearance and goodness. The value of class-meetings consists in the opportunity they give for self-examination and self-scrutiny, so necessary in order to a growth in grace, and the opportunities they afford of Christian union ; as Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." These class-meetings grew up out of certain religious societies of the Church of England which originated ninety years before Wesley's time among men and women determined to seek a higher degree of godliness than seemed to prevail in society around them, or even in the Church. Wesley was brought into connection with these societies in a providential way, and he adopted them, and

they became one of the great safeguards of the Methodist Church and a chief source of its strength.

We now come to the duties which devolve upon all who enter this communion and enjoy this fellowship.

The first duty will be to make use of these privileges for personal salvation. The privileges we have named give you an opportunity, for instance, for obtaining a knowledge of Christian doctrine. We are here Sunday after Sunday to expound the doctrines of the Gospel. Take heed that you learn the Gospel doctrine as you hear it preached, and learn it from the word of God put into your hands. The Methodist scheme of doctrine is very simple, very broad and comprehensive. Methodism originated not in questions of doctrine, but in relation to the practical duty of a religious life. Methodism is but a revival of religion, and was so in its beginnings; and is intended to be, in its whole history, a revival of primitive godliness. As such, the question of doctrine is not the fundamental requirement. The Articles of Religion in our Church are twenty-five in number. You will be surprised, if you have never examined them before, that there is no controversial question involved in them but that with the Romish Church. These twenty-five ordinances are taken out of the Articles of the Church of England, some of the Articles of that Church being left out. Predestination is

omitted, and the question left open, as far as these ordinances of religion are concerned; and so with other questions. Take in connection with this statement the life of John Wesley; he did not ask if a man believed in predestination, or final perseverance, or depravity, but, "Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as a Saviour? Do you believe yourself to be a sinner, and are you willing to receive Christ as your Saviour?"

The substance of doctrine is the great dogma of justification by faith, and the doctrine which flows out of it—the divinity of Christ. If we must be saved by justification Christ must be divine to save us. It is not into controverted questions that I care to lead you. Do not trouble your heads about predestination, and questions of metaphysics, which belong to the region of philosophy, and ought to be taken out and kept out of the arena of religion. We are endowed with will to repent, and knowledge that we are all sinners and need a Saviour, and that Jesus Christ is ready to be our Saviour and will save all that come to God through him. In the providence of God it has come to be considered that the Methodist Church is intrusted with two doctrines—the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, and that of Christian perfection. They are not doctrines in the strictest sense of the word; they are not theories or dogmas at all. No dogmatic statement is needed of the fact that when a

Christian man is received into the favor of God he receives the witness of it himself ; the Holy Spirit witnesses to his spirit that he is a child of God. This doctrine is as old as the Church of England—you will find it in her dogmas ; as old as the Church of Rome—you will find it in the lives of the saints who in the dark ages shone like lights in a benighted land ; you will find it in the writings of Augustine, Cyprian, Tertullian ; it is as old as Paul, and is taught by Christ to his disciples : “ The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” This doctrine is the doctrine of the Church, and you will find it illustrated in practice by every Christian Church—at least by all with whose members I have ever come in contact.

The doctrine of Christian perfection is on the same basis. We are bound to love God with our whole soul ; bound to take God at his word when he says, “ Be ye perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.” There are two errors into which this exhortation may lead you : one is to think despondently that it is utterly impossible to attempt to approach such a standard ; and the other is, to excuse your faults by saying it is impossible to be a perfect Christian. You have no right to lower the standard of Christianity, and it is perilous to yourself to do it. Never

dare to say that what God enjoins is impossible, or that he sets before us a model he does not mean us to follow. Set before yourself the highest model, and let no failure hide it from your view.

Another duty is for every member of the Church to promote the well-being of the Church. You are taught of God to love one another ; as Christians we are bound to a special regard for each other. The spirit of Christianity is a harmonizing spirit as well as an elevating one. It was thought a great manifestation of the power of the Gospel in old times when the rich man and the poor man could be found worshipping together. Travelers in France, Germany, and Italy speak of the beauty of seeing upon the stone floors of those grand cathedrals the prince and pauper kneeling side by side, each recognizing the common Father, the difference in rank and wealth being forgotten. It is not the outward form of this harmony and equality which is truly beautiful, but the inward fellowship and the sense that all men before God are alike—the inward communion fostered by a spiritual religion.

I enjoin it upon you, then, that you cultivate this inward spirit ; that you love your neighbor in the Church, whether a poor or rich man ; that you do not shun him because of his riches if you are poor, nor because of his poverty if you are rich. All these things are accidental ; in the fellowship of the Church

we are all rich together, because we are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. What does it matter to me, then, if my next door neighbor, a godly man, be a poor man? if he be clothed in linsey and I clad in silk? He may have treasures in heaven which will outvalue all of mine.

We are to labor not merely for our personal good, but also for the spread of the Gospel. All should do what they can to hasten the coming of Christ's kingdom, as illustrated in that beautiful psalm containing what would seem to some a strange sentiment to come out of the mouth of a Jew—so full of rich and broad and genial generosity, so unlike the supposed closeness and narrowness of the Jewish mind—"God be merciful unto us, and bless us; that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations." When we pray that God will be merciful to us, and pour out upon us all his endless graces and enlarge our borders, our prayers come back upon ourselves; but how different when we ask these favors to the end that God may be known upon all the earth! You are, as members of the Church, to labor for its advancement; you are enlisted in this army of Christ, and are bound to fight that Christ may be the victor. Go to class-meeting and prayer-meeting, and all such assemblages; it is not only a privilege, but a duty. You may feel indisposed to go; there may be other things which seem

to be more attractive claiming your attention ;
but be faithful in all things. He that is faithful
in small matters will be faithful in great ones,
and he that is not faithful in these, how can he
be trusted in great things? -

XI.

THE IMPORT OF THE SUPPER.

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.—1 *Cor. xi*, 26.

I PURPOSE this morning speaking of the Lord's Supper. I can only do this in certain aspects of the subject, because to treat of it in full, in its nature and in its relation to the Church and to the individual, would require a whole series of sermons. Every name we give it implies a different aspect. We call it the Eucharist—a feast of thanksgiving; the Lord's Supper—that is to say, a feast in which we have communion with Christ at his own invitation. There are a great many names, and each of them is significant.

A preliminary remark upon the sacraments of the Gospel: We have two sacraments—Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. There were two rites in the old dispensation to which these correspond—Circumcision, and the Passover; the one the rite of initiation, and the other the rite of confirmation. There must be such rites as these in every religious organization,

and there is something analogous to them in every form of organization. The right of initiation under the old law was circumcision, performed once, and once only, upon a subject who was a mere passive recipient. So the rite of baptism in the New Testament is performed once, and once only, and upon a passive recipient. There is nothing voluntary about the sacrament considered in itself; the subject receives the baptism—the effusion of the water, the pouring of it or the immersion in it—by some other hand. On the contrary, the rite of confirmation under the old law was the passover, which included certain acts on the part of the partaker, as well as the outward and visible elements of the sacrament itself. The lamb had to be procured and slain, and was then roasted and eaten: all these implying voluntary acts of the participant. So in this sacrament there is God's part in providing the elements and constituting them what they are; and, on the other hand, the participation of the voluntary communicants who go to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and partake of the emblems of the sacrament—eat and drink them. This little simple statement, if you will carry it home and think about it, will put aside many of the strange and difficult questions which have got about these two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The one is the rite of initiation, and the other the rite of confirmation. You can very

easily see, if it be discussed whether children or grown people are to be baptized—whether by sprinkling, or pouring, or immersion—how trifling these differences are when compared with the real substance. They are akin to the disputes as to whether the bread should be leavened or unleavened, whether the wine should be fully pressed or fermented, or drunk from cups of silver or glass. All these are minor questions. We are to be baptized by water, and the form matters not ; we are invited to communion with the Lord Jesus, and the materials are simple bread and wine. And if the sacrament is in that form, the other things are minor and of no importance.

Let us contemplate the real substance of this sacrament for us as Christian people.

I. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper looks back upon the past, and in that sense is a memorial.

II. It has relation to the present time and our present personal condition, and in this sense is a means of grace.

III. It looks forward prophetically to the future, and in this sense is a pledge of everlasting life to all who worthily partake of it.

This sacrament looks back upon the past, and in this sense is a memorial. It is a commemorative ordinance. Commemorative of—what? Of that for the very purpose of which it was instituted—the cir-

cumstances under which it was instituted. Ah, how apt we are to forget our benefactors! How apt we are to forget even those that we love! Take that single sentence home now and see if it is not so. Ten or twenty years ago you buried some one out of your sight, and it seemed as if the very light of your life were gone—a light that could never come back again; and you said so—that it should be never more. And yet that loved image now stands away back in the distance, dim and shadowy, and it is only when some memorial, some type, some sign, some sacrament brings back the recollection, that the old love is felt. It is not gone, I admit; but we are so apt to forget. And so we forget our greatest benefactors. Mankind are prone to remember those that hurt them, rather than the benefactor who brings blessings at every step of his path in life.

Hack a tree with an ax, and the scar remains for ages. The circles that gather around in the effort of nature to obliterate it seem more and more to perpetuate it. But the care of the gardener who planted it, who watched and watered it, that is all forgotten. So it is with men. Even that great sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, the purchase of our redemption by that bitter death, even the circumstances of that death itself, we are apt to forget unless perpetually reminded. And so, in this aspect, the very institution of the Lord's Supper is a kind

condescension on the part of God to our weakness and infirmity; and whenever the Church administers the sacrament, whether once a month or once a week, it is intended as a sign, a memorial, a picture of the Lord Jesus, a painting of the crucifixion, a sculpture for us, if our imaginative faith be strong enough to take in all the scene upon Calvary. Nay, more, not merely a painting or statue, but bringing back again, if our eye of faith be strong enough to see it, the living, breathing, suffering, dying Saviour as he hung there upon the cross, with the blood still flowing through his veins and arteries strong and quick as in the flush of his manly life; then as it ebbed away and he became weaker and weaker, paler and paler, until at last he died. This sacrament is thus meant to be a memorial and bring back to us the day of our Saviour's death, the nights of his humiliation in the grave. "This do in remembrance of me."

There is special fitness in the matter of the institution as well as in the form: in the bread and wine which constitute the matter of the sacraments. The bread—we take it, and it is broken, and we eat it; the wine—it is poured out, and we drink it. And what are these? The bread, how is it made? That bread cannot be made for you every day as the nourishment for your physical frame, except at this expense: the beautiful grain must be taken at its maturity, the beautiful head of wheat must be rudely

cut down, and then it passes into the hands of the laborer, or under the hoof of the horse, or beneath the thrashing-flail, or into the pressure of the machine, until it is stripped of its husk, and life is entirely taken from it so far as outward and material instruments can do it, and then it is put between the upper and nether millstone and ground to powder. And that is not all. You must take it and cause the elements of death to show themselves ; the putrefaction of fermentation must begin before you can have the light, beautiful, life-preserving bread. And so with the wine. You cannot get the mantling wine, with its beautiful color and refreshing properties, except by taking the grape in the full blush of its bloom and richness, and cutting it from the vine, and subjecting it to pressure, and after that to fermentation, that out of destruction and death shall be brought the life-producing, life-preserving wine.

So it is with our Lord and Saviour. He lived ; but if he had only lived there would have been no life for us. He lived and died upon the cross that you and I might live ; that is to say, this bread of God came down from heaven to be our nourishment. It had to be cut off in its full bloom, to be subject to the flail, to the pressure and power of the mill, to be ground between the upper and the nether millstone, to be laid in the grave, and the beginning of its corruption to appear, and then its resurrection ;

and now it is possible for Christ to be the living bread coming down from heaven, and whoever eats of it shall live for evermore. The bread and the wine are alike emblematic of the strength which the Church receives, and through her each individual member, from this blessed communion with Christ, which we commemorate when we partake of the Supper of the Lord. So we commemorate his sorrows and sufferings in this way for our own sake. And how rich a blessing is it that such a commemoration is given !

And further, our faith in Christ is excited by these emblems, as he is "evidently set forth among us crucified and slain." If we come to this sacrament remembering what this bread and wine are an emblem of, and our hearts are filled with it, this passage will be true, that here, as we surround the altar of God, "Christ is visibly set forth among us crucified and slain," for "visibly" is what is meant by the word "evidently" in the passage ; the effect of the memorial being to bring us back to the cross, to bring the cross down to us. That is the effect of it if we come with a living and true faith to partake of the blessed sacrament. By this commemoration we feel the dripping blood of Christ as if we had sat under his cross ; the anguish of those pains we feel as if we had seen them on Calvary. The spear that pierced my Saviour's side has rotted long ago ; the cross on which they hung him has passed away, gone into corruption ;

but the water and blood that flowed on the piercing of his side by the soldier—the terror and anguish and pain that he endured upon that bitter cross—all these are as fresh as if the cross had been reared but yesterday, and Christ hung upon it to-day. Our faith brings them to us, because the efficacy of that cross and of Christ's redemption is an everlasting efficacy.

There is another aspect of this commemorative feature of the sacrament to which I must call your attention: "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show the Lord's death till he come." We show it as an historical testimony of the fact of his death. Every time the followers of Jesus Christ gather around his table and partake of the bread and wine as emblems of his broken body and shed blood, they add an additional evidence to the truth of the Gospel history. This ordinance is a perpetual memorial and proof of the facts of Christ's death, and the professed objects of it. Can you find a day in history, from the day of Christ's institution of this sacrament the night before he died, on which it has not been observed? No single week has rolled away these eighteen hundred and thirty years—no single week has rolled away, since the hour of Christ's consecration of the bread and wine of this ordinance until now, in which there has not been a gathering to testify to this truth. There gather a few of them • sadly and in tears within a few days after the death

of the Saviour. They gather in stronger numbers and with stronger hopes after the day of Pentecost, and so the bread is broken and the wine poured out and Christ remembered, and his death borne witness to. So, then, brethren, we too are as historical witnesses to the fact of Christ's death, and every time we come here we add one new stone to the great fabric of Christian evidence, one new testimony to the truth of this Gospel. There is something, to my mind, very striking and very beautiful in this one single evidence of the truth of Christianity—that you cannot point to any other beginning of this sacrament than that recorded, and that there is no stronger historical proof of any event than the commemoration in honor of it. Such is our Fourth of July; and if it should be only celebrated as it is, once in each year, yet at the end of ten thousand years the force of it as a testimony would be just as great as it is now, unless some one could point to the day when it was instituted without foundation. In history testimony of this kind is considered better than almost any other. But we do more than this as witnesses, and not only testify to the fact of Christ's death, but testify to it with praise and approbation. The cross of the Lord Jesus was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to us who believe, it is the power of God unto salvation; that is to say, as often as we eat of this bread and drink this wine, we show the

death of the Lord until he come, and in coming around this altar we come to say, What? That the cross of Christ is no longer a stumbling-block or foolishness, that to us the offense of the cross is taken away forever ; not merely that it is not offensive, but that it is our crowning glory that we have a right to come to it and say, with a higher emphasis than Paul said, " I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." And when we surround this altar we come as witnesses to a fact and to the glory of a fact, each of us taking up the strain, and saying, " I joy and glory in the cross of Christ ;" each one of us says, " I testify to the power of the religion of the Redeemer ;" each one of us says as Paul says, and with a higher emphasis, " God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

The second aspect of the sacrament is its relation to the present as a means of grace. Christ died, and we commemorate the sacrifice ; but more than this, he *rose again*, and is with us here, a living Saviour. Bread and wine come again in types, types of the nourishment of life and its preservation. We have in this sacrament the communion of his body and blood, which nourishes and sanctifies us in this life and prepares us for everlasting life in heaven.

The tree of life which stood in the garden of Eden was sacramental, and to eat of the tree was the law of the preservation of life under the Adamic covenant. The covenant was this : " Eat and thou shalt live. Here is the tree of life ; the matter of this sacrament is the fruit of this tree, and thou shalt eat of it and shalt live." When Adam was banished the sacrament was revoked, the tree of life was guarded by cherubim with flaming swords turning every way. But under the promise that Christ should come again, under all dispensations — Abrahamic and Mosaic — all the way along up to the time when Christ instituted the Lord's Supper, you will find some sacrament, some sign between God and man. The tree of paradise was the antitype of the paschal blood that saved Israel's first-born in the hour when the angel of death passed over Egypt ; of the pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night ; of the manna that sustained them in the desert, and of the passover established in the promised land and kept up until the coming of the Lord Jesus. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was substituted for the passover. Christ our Passover is slain for us. All these were in their time means of grace, comforting and sustaining. The Israelite was likely to doubt the strength and willingness of God to carry him onward, but could be convinced by Moses suddenly pointing upward, " See there ! behold that rising vapor as it curls above the marching millions

of Israel, and then no longer doubt !” So in the hour of night and darkness the same leader and guide could tell him, “ See there ! behold that pillar of fire, beginning over the ark, ascending, and widening as it ascends ! That is the type and pledge of God’s promise to his people.” And so in all ages the natural heart of man has seen in the rainbow spanning the sky the type of God’s attributes of mercy and grace, and all people in all ages have looked up to that unimaginable beauty as a sacrament between God and man, an assurance that God’s blessing should never more fail to mankind.

In the Lord’s Supper we come to refresh ourselves more than the Israelites could in sight of the cloud and fire, and be fed more than they could by the manna, for our celestial manna is the bread of this sacrament, and whosoever eateth and drinketh in the name of the Lord Jesus eateth and drinketh to his salvation. “ The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ ? ” How can this be true ? It is really and literally true that in coming to this communion Christ is actually and substantially to be partaken of by those who believe on him. I do not mean that the bread and wine are turned into the physical body of the Lord Jesus. What a delusion that is that any thing is substantial that can be seen

and touched ! The least substantial are those that can be seen or touched. The substance of this outward physical form is that which we cannot see. We do not even know what it is. Take the substance of the oak wood or pine wood. You do not know what the substance of it is at all ; you know certain outward properties which it possesses, but that is all. Christ is really and substantially present with his children in this sacrament. Though we do not see him, or eat of his body in a tangible and physical sense, or drink of his blood, yet we do really find our Saviour in those memorials of him. Let me illustrate this by a single case out of the Gospel. Our Saviour, passing through a great crowd of people, suddenly said, " Who is it that touched me, for I find virtue has gone out of me ? " Yet no one had touched his person, his face, or hands, or feet, or any part of his body. It was nothing but a poor woman who had taken hold of the outer edge of his long robe, perhaps four or five feet from his person ; only the hem of his garment was touched, and yet the touch brought life to her, and the Saviour knew it, and said, " Some one hath touched me. " So when we come to surround this table, and come so near to Christ as to take the emblems of his body and blood, we are nearer than to be touching the very hem of his garment. If we have faith to believe it, our Saviour is with us.

We are nourished in our souls, in our love for him, in our purposes of good, and get ourselves strengthened to bear the ills, temptations, and shocks of life, and to prepare for death and judgment. And so we have often found a means of grace in this communion. When our faith is strong in it

“Our spirits drink a fresh supply,
And eat the bread so freely given,
Till, borne on eagle’s wings, we fly,
And banquet with our Lord in heaven.”

If there be a doubting Thomas in the congregation who has never been able fully to realize our Lord, and has been going for years with his head bowed down, I say come to the communion, to the altar of God, if you are willing to see Him. Do this in remembrance of Christ, and open your eyes, and you shall see the hole caused by the spear of the soldier, and put your hand in it ; you shall see the wounds in his hands and feet ; you shall see him with his body broken and crushed for you, and you shall be led to say, “My Lord and my God.” Come, and let this communion be for you the means of grace. How many have felt in surrounding this altar not only their own resolutions renewed, but the baptism of the Holy Ghost renewed, fresh power given to them, and that the mysterious manifestation of grace in the sacrament has renewed their faith as followers of Christ.

Looking toward the future, we find in this sacrament a pledge of glory and everlasting life. "He said unto them With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come." There Christ institutes this supper, and tells His followers that it is His supper and His supper of communion, but that he will drink it no more with them until the fulfillment of the kingdom of God. Then he will drink it and join them again in it; then an everlasting supper will be renewed—an everlasting supper of the Lamb—and not till then. "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup you do show the Lord's death till He come." That is to say, we are keeping up a memorial of it here in the wilderness until He shall come again; until the wilderness shall blossom as the rose. And surely this communion is a pledge of that coming—a seal and assurance of it. As often as we partake of it we know that our Master shall come. He comes to us in the communion itself as a pledge of that last coming. More than this, the Lord's Supper is to last until His coming, but no longer. We are not to have it in this shape in heaven. It is a memorial

of Christ's coming. Whenever a pledge is given it is given as security that a certain contract shall be performed, and when it is performed the pledge is given up. So it shall be with the Lord's Supper; when Christ's kingdom is come the Lord's Supper shall end. But what shall take its place? The Lord's Supper is a pledge and earnest of the marriage feast of the Lamb. "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude," writes John on the Island of Patmos, "and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia : for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him : for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

Every time we surround this altar and partake of the Lord's Supper we have a pledge, a foretaste and assurance of that great marriage supper of the Lamb, an invitation to which shall be the crowning glory of every redeemed soul. Oh, to be sure of that invitation ! Oh, to be sure of the wedding-garment ! that when these guest tables are prepared, and these viands of heaven are set out by celestial servitors, when the fruits of the immortal garden are for the

Lord's army, and the vines of the heavenly vineyards have been pressed by the Lord's husbandmen, and the everlasting bread of the kingdom of glory shall be set out on the golden plates and dishes of that great banqueting-house, that I may be called, and my seat be ready, that I may have only to come at the sound of the last trump and obey the willing impulse of my own regenerated and redeemed soul; that my ears may be open to listen when that sound which shall wake the dead to life shall burst upon the darkness and silence! Then the angels shall carry me to the entrance of that great banqueting-hall, and I shall rise with the marriage festal garments on me, ready to enter in! This is what the Lord pledges me when I partake of it, and what he pledges you; the assurance of redemption and the pledge of immortal life.

XII.

THE MORNING-STAR.

I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning-star.—*Rev. xxii, 16.*

THE Book of Revelation is full of mystery ; but whatever disputes there have been about its meaning, no one has ever questioned that its main object is to set forth the trials and the triumphs of the Church of God upon the earth. The differences of opinion are as to the interpretation of the book, not as to its object. So in all its wondrous pictures we can find delineated the fortunes of the kingdom of God. Its thunders are the wedding music of the nuptials of God's eternal truths with the facts of humanity ; its trumpet peals proclaim the triumphs of the cross of Christ ; its choirs of shouting angels and innumerable hosts of the redeemed all unite in the same utterance, the same song of a victorious redemption.

So the text is an epitome of the book, and is, in fact, an epitome of the whole Gospel. It is one of the peculiarities of this last book of the Bible that you find many such passages as this summing up at the

end of the book all that had gone before, gathering, so to speak, all the substance of the revelation in this last manifestation of it. Taking up the threads from afar in the very beginnings of God's manifestations to man, the very first manifestation after the fall, the promise when he said the woman's seed should bruise the serpent's head ; taking up the histories and prophecies and poems of the Old Testament, and binding them up and uniting them as none but the Great Architect of heaven could unite them with the destinies of the future, and presenting them all in pictures, in visions, and images, this final Revelation now and then, as in the text, condenses them into short terse and vigorous passages, containing each in itself an epitome of all the word of God. And so we find in this text,

I. The true origin of the kingdom of God and of Christ as its author ; and,

II. The earthly manifestation of Christ in the kingdom of God ; and,

III. The final and glorious triumph of the kingdom of God.

I find all these things in the text : " I am the root of David"—that implies the true origin of Christ and Christ's kingdom through Him : " I am the offspring of David"—that implies the earthly manifestation of that kingdom and of Christ as its theocratic pillar : " I am the bright and morning-star"—that implies the

final chasing away of all darkness, and the overthrow of all iniquity.

Let us look, then, at the first point in the text, involving Christ as the true origin of the kingdom of God — “I am the root of David.” I take this passage as meaning to assert the pre-existence of the Lord Jesus Christ when we consider the passage in relation to the context and the rest of the word of God. The first part of the text is antithetical to the second, the latter meaning the humanity of Christ as the offspring of David, and the former his divinity as the root of David. Root is to be taken in its literal sense. We read of the ax being laid to the root of the tree: the “love of money is the root of all evil,” implying the source or ground. In the eleventh chapter of the Romans it is said, “If the root be holy so are the branches.” I am aware that critics say that the word root is here to be taken in the sense of sprout, so that root and offspring would be made synonymous. I cannot agree with them in view of the context and of the whole tenor of the Scriptures, and especially in view of the thirteenth verse of this chapter, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” What does that mean? So far as it asserts the personality of Jesus Christ it implies what the text implies. So in the first chapter and eighth verse, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending; which is and which was

and which is to come, the Almighty." No words can be broader or stronger than these. It is one of those grand passages which came to re-assure the apostle John when, under the blinding influence of the magnificent visions which appeared to him in the Island of Patmos, his soul staggered under those strange phenomena, and more than once he swooned in presence of the great and wonderful Being brought before him in the vision, "whose eyes were as a flame of fire, whose voice was as the sound of many waters." And then he goes on to tell us that the Son of man laid his right hand upon him and said, "Fear not; I am the first and the last; I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore!"

Taking this interpretation for granted, what practical meaning does the text bring us under this first head? First, a just view of the celestial origin of our religion in Christ as its divine author. No question is more fundamental for any man than the view he takes of Christ. His whole religion turns upon that; whether it shall be Christianity or not Christianity turns upon that; not upon whether he calls himself or thinks himself a Christian. And it is upon that, as I endeavored to show you two weeks ago in treating of unbelief as the primal sin, the all comprehending sin, the last sin excluded from the world—it is upon that that man's final destiny must depend. "What

think ye of Christ?" said Christ to the Pharisees. They answered, "He is the son of David." "How, then, doth David in spirit call him Lord? 'And the Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.' If David then called him Lord, how is he the son of David?" It was Christ who asked this question—the same Christ who says in this last chapter of the Revelation, "I am the root and offspring of David"—and no man could answer him a word. What is the meaning of the question? They all understood that the Messiah was to come of that royal race, but the solution of the great problem of the Messiahship, the interpretation of Isaiah's prophecies, which remained dark in the Jewish mind—that God was manifest in the flesh through the Lord Jesus Christ; that Christ was not only the son of David, but the Lord of David; not only the offspring of David, but the root of David—this the Pharisees did not, and most of them would not, understand, and they would not because of their unbelief. The penalty of it was that they came not into the kingdom of God; never knew its light, never shared its redemption.

Let us fix this one point, then, clearly in our piety and faith, that our religion is a divine religion, and not a mere formula of the schools; not a doctrine of philosophy or theological exposition wrought out by good men, fathers of the Church; not a part of the

progress of civilization, but the final hope of humanity, the ship in which all who are to be saved from the wreck are and must be saved ; that because God is its author the kingdom established here is a royal kingdom, the regal dwelling-place of the Almighty on earth, in Christ incarnate among men ; that God is the author of this city of Jerusalem, as he is the author of the New Jerusalem on high.

Our text, then, rebukes as unchristian all those theories which deny the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. The root from which David sprang is the same root from which all creation sprang, "for by Him," says the epistle to the Colossians, "were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers : all things were created by Him and for Him, and He is before all these things, and by Him all things consist." The Pharisees were stumbled mightily at the idea that he was the root of David, the source from which that right royal power sprang ; that from him descended all that was in David's royalty, magnificence, and power, and far, O far beyond even that Judean throne, first and last of human empires in existence, this reign of our Redeemer ! the Author of all thrones in heaven and earth ; of all principalities, whether in the celestial hierarchy or kingdoms here among men ! Our text rebukes any theory that denies his divinity, whether

Socinian, Arian, Unitarian, liberalizing, or whatever else ; all are shut out from Christianity in its essential character. I do not mean to use any harsh terms, or say that men cannot be followers of Christ and differ from me in this theory of the Trinity ; but this I am bound to say, standing before you as an expositor of God's truth, according to the best of my judgment, that if I could not acknowledge Jesus Christ as the root of David I could find no comfort in thinking of him as the offspring of David ; that Christianity, if not thus divine in its origin, could have no superior or exclusive claims, and might some day be superseded by another system !

If this be true, then, how strong should be our confidence in Christ, who has wisdom and power infinite at his back as the leader of his Church, and is endowed with almighty functions to carry on his leadership to a glorious triumph ! How fervent should be our love for Christ our Messiah when we remember that it was not a man who humbled himself, nor an angel who took upon himself human shape to be our Redeemer, but He who created all things, and without whom there was nothing made that was made—the God of all the worlds who came to this earth emptying Himself of his greatness—the Ancient of Days cradling Himself as a babe that we might be saved !

The second point in the text is the manifestation of God in the flesh, and also of his kingdom here—

“I am the root and offspring of David.” Discrepancies have been discovered in the genealogies of Luke, but they are of no account in the broad and general way in which ordinary minds treat the subject, so that, however we look at Christ, he belonged to the royal line of David ; yet he humbled himself to humanity, and “took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man.” The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah connects this with our text : “For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground : He hath no form nor comeliness ; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.” And again in the eleventh chapter : “There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots :” and it goes on referring to the Messiah, and we know from all the history that it is fulfilled in the Lord Jesus. We find, then, Christ upon the earth, a man of royal race, though it had fallen ; a race like a tree cut down, great and overshadowing in its time, but fallen. Out of its roots there comes a sprout, the rod that is to come from Jesse, the branch that is to come from that sunken root, now lying in the earth soiled and dishonored ; for the race of David, though it might have been cherished theoretically among the Jews, was of no account outwardly ; but a rod was to spring up near it far to transcend, in the grandeur of its proportions, the

royal tree of David's house. It is a very beautiful thought. Christ was the descendant of that very David who himself as a conquering king was typical of Christ. The race of David was to be renewed ; there was to be a second David. Who was to be this David ? A conqueror, the greatest the Jews ever had in his personal qualities and successes, in the favor with which God regarded him ; that conquering David who said exultingly—for the Psalms are full of exultation in his own power and in the divine power sustaining it—"I have run through a troop ; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.

I have pursued mine enemies and overtaken them." But the race of David was sunk and degraded when this progenitor of an infinite line of kings, a succession of monarchs that should reign forever in the earth and in heaven, instituted a race of new kings and priests to God. Is not each of us a David, and more than a David, in privileges, in communication with God and holy joy and triumph ? This scion of a royal house, and founder of a race of kings, was born and cradled in a manger. "He came unto his own and his own received him not." The Pharisees and Sadducees who looked for a Messiah of the royal race of David looked for manifestations such as David himself had shown : a conquering king, one which should be able to "run through a troop and leap over a wall." They took these prophecies in their

outward and literal seeming, neglecting the inward and spiritual, and when Christ came "his own received him not." But let us always remember in judging of them that he came to them as a man in human form, and, so far as the manifestations of humanity are concerned, like you or me. He lived a life of suffering, and died as a man, and as a man he worked out our redemption.

What uses are we to get out of this parallel? That if Christ were a man as well as God, then as a man he knew our frailty ; as a man he shrank as we shrink, endured as we endure, felt pain as we are called to feel pain. I do not know that we take in the full thought of the humanity of Christ as much as we ought in our way of thinking about religion, and yet we are taught that the manifestation of God in Christ was the solution of the great problem of the universe, the welding of eternity with time ; that that was what was needed, and which alone would suffice to clear up the mystery of man's fall ; that he bore sorrows and pain that we might have everlasting life. We believe all this, but do not think as much as we ought of Christ in his humanity. I remember reading somewhere an account of a poor man who was in great distress and affliction, poor, oppressed, and sick. A Pastor being informed of the case visited him, and found him in a rebellious frame of mind. "Oh," said the Pastor to him, "can-

not you endure this suffering of yours with patience? Did not your Saviour endure worse suffering? Was he not poorer and more afflicted?" "Yes," retorted the patient; "and if I were a God, and could work miracles and deliver myself out of all my troubles when I chose, I, of course, would be able to endure." There is something of that spirit in our habitual way of thinking of Christ, forgetting that he lived and worked and suffered and died as a man. The manifestations of his divinity were occasional, and for the very purpose that called them out—to display his power, to justify his claims and vindicate his assertions that he was the Son of God, the Messiah—for these purposes the manifestations of his divinity among men were essential; and yet how few they were in the whole course of his life! He ate as we eat, he drank as we drink, slept as we do, wept in his sorrow, walked the streets and indulged in social converse with his friends, visited them in their houses, dined, supped, and chatted with them as we do, and when at last he came to the final scene he suffered as we do, only ten thousand times more; and dying he died as a man would die—by the exhaustion of nervous power, by the failure of the vital functions, as you or I should die if we were put upon the cross. It is not too much to say that Christ's divinity availed him nothing whatever on the earth, so far as his own personal comfort or advantage

was concerned. His divinity was displayed not for his sake, but for ours, that we might receive the everlasting atonement made for us, and not that he should suffer any the less : not one pang was softened by a consciousness of the Godhead of Christ, not one moment of weariness was alleviated, not one drop the less of blood demanded, not one bead of sweat the less on that immortal brow. Christ was the offspring of David, and a man like us. He knows what our trials are, for he has felt the same.

Let us look at the third and last head : Christ is the leader of his Church, and will be until his final triumph. "I am the bright and morning-star." Throughout the Bible the star is made a symbol of dominion, glory, and triumph. There is great beauty and aptness in the figure in this general use, and especially in its application to Christ. There is no more lovely object in the whole universe of God than Venus rising in the east in the morning. She sits there in the vast dome serene and calm and bright, and as she appears the other stars go out, and the night slowly vanishes, first into the twilight, and then, while her calm light is still pouring forth its solitary beauty into the atmosphere over the earth and sky, the daylight comes on. As Milton says :

" Fairest of stars, last in the train of night,
If better thou belong not to the dawn,
Sure pledge of day, that crown'st the smiling morn,
While day arises, that sweet hour of prime."

What figure more exquisite, more apt in illustrating the relation of the Lord Jesus Christ to his kingdom and to the destinies of humanity! The star appears small up yonder, and yet it is a very vast planet; so Christ appears small to the by-standers at his coming—a mere humble man like ourselves. How little did they know what was in him! The star is small, but how wide-spreading is its light! That small, twinkling Venus—all the continents, and hemispheres, and islands are bathed in her delicious lustre! And so in reference to the breadth of Christ's kingdom and its extent is the figure exquisite and applicable. There is a passage in Numbers which brings together the two extremes of Pentateuch and Revelation as containing the same thought. It is the prophecy of Balaam: "I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh; there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel." There you see in the dawn of history Christ was predicted under this figure of a star—the star and the sceptre together as symbols of dominion.

In a time of gloom the star appeared. There had been days of far greater brightness in prophecy and history. There was a time in the Jewish history when the glory of the earth seemed to be centred in Jerusalem, and men might fancy that the last development of God's kingdom was there in the splendor

of the temple on the summit of Moriah ; but all the glory and beauty and magnificence of that temple of Solomon had passed away forever. So all that had been rich and great in their civilization was rotten at the core, the political dominion gone, and the dominion in art and science going. The Roman empire was apparently in its pride and strength ; but, as we all know now, it was bloom outside and the worm within. All the hopes of the Jews one after another had disappeared. The desires for the coming of a Deliverer, which had been cherished and expressed here and there and yonder—not merely in Judea, but in all other countries, by the foremost minds, whether inspired or uninspired—had failed, and it was an era of desolateness, vice, and darkness, of intellectual pride, along with intellectual weakness, when Christ came upon the earth. It was what the Apostle calls the fullness of time. It is fitting that this manifestation of Christ at such a time should be called the dawning of the day-star. Job talks of the eyelids of the morning, and this star, first shooting from the eyelids of the morning upon this dark night of the earth, was the first premonition of the coming of the day.

The birds of night cannot stand before the coming dawn when Venus shines in her lustre in the sky. They all betake themselves to their secret places, and beasts of prey, prowling only in the night, wan-

der off as the dawn comes and hide themselves. When Christ appeared upon the earth the very first scintillation of the day-star was to warn all the old systems of wrong and outrage, oppression and darkness, that their time had come. What has become of the civilization of the ancients, of their worships and their temples? the temples of Jupiter and Juno, and other grand structures dedicated to the thirty thousand gods of the heathen mythology? The ruins of them are now strewn around eastern cities; majestic remains at Rome and Athens, and "Palmyra central in the desert;" but the spirit that hung over them during their ages of power and dominion has forsaken them forever; it had to vanish when the star of the morning dawned. So it was even with the system of Judaism, which, as God's own, was something very different; but before Christianity all that system vanished; sacrifices, priesthood, all went away when the true final sacrifice, the last and greatest High-priest, came.

And for the diffusion of light as well as the scattering of darkness the figure has aptness and beauty. Remember how the old heroes and great prophets talk of the morning as to come. There is a yearning, a hope and prayer, an unconscious and sometimes a conscious prophecy of the morning. David, all through the Psalms, looked forward to it. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morn-

ing." All through the Psalms and Proverbs there seems to be an anticipation of this day-star of which the text speaks. In 2 Sam. xxiii we read, as the last words of King David before he died, "He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds ; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." All these figures have the same thought in them, and there is the same exquisite fitness in them that the manifestation of Christ was the opening of the world's last great day.

The lesson for us as individuals is a simple one. Has the day-star yet shone into your heart? If not, hearken to the prophet : "Seek Him that maketh the seven stars and Orion : The LORD is his name!"

For the Church, the lesson is one of hope and confidence. In darkness and fear the watchman trod his weary rounds, and was asked, "Watchman, what of the night? watchman, what of the night?" Now that the darkness has been dispelled, now that the day-star has risen, we sing joyfully,

" Trav'ler, blessedness and light,
Peace and truth, its course portends.
Watchman, will its beams, alone,
Gild the spot that gave them birth?
Trav'ler, ages are its own ;
See, it bursts o'er all the earth."

From the dawn of Christ's religion in the earth the light has been increasing in wider and still

wider circles, diffusing itself more and more in each succeeding day into the very heart and life of mankind, spreading from land to land, from shore to shore, from kingdom to kingdom. It has its development on earth, and is more or less obstructed ; but, like every development which is a real and divine one, it goes on, and this day there is more light, more Gospel truth over the face of this earth than ever there was before. The morning-star dawned one thousand eight hundred years ago, and we are coming out into the daylight. Not yet is the full, broad day here, but it is coming. “ Our weeping may endure for the night, but ”—Oh how joyful !—“ there shall be joy for mankind and for us in the morning.”

XIII.

THE CROSS A BURDEN.

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.—*Gal. vi, 14.*

I PREACHED from this text a fortnight ago, and treated of the cross of Christ as bringing us blessing and salvation. I resume the text again in order that we may now contemplate the cross of Christ as bringing us responsibilities and duties. You will find always these two sides to every question that can come up in Christian doctrine.

Let us contemplate the cross, in the first place, as an illustrious manifestation and teacher of *benevolence*. The whole life of Christ, in fact, was an illustration of the highest and purest benevolence. From the beginning, as soon as his active life took its form, until the last hour of his agony on the cross, he went about doing good to the bodies of men as well as to their souls. A teacher he was, but a teacher who taught by example ; bringing with him everywhere the atmosphere of gentleness and kindness ; treating with the same tenderness the ingrate as

the loving, bringing to the hardest hearted the same offering of mercy as to the most humble, showing in all places the same ever gentle, ever meek, ever loving heart. You find that all his miracles are miracles of benevolence ; none tending to harm or to hurt, but to bless the bodies and souls of those who came within his reach. And so he bore himself even in little things, kind to those who were asleep when they should have been awake, caring for those who were hungry by reason of their own improvidence ; always, both in his personal manners and general and public activities, showing the same example of love and benevolence. Such was his life ; and his life might be dwelt upon for many, many days as affording such illustrations. But I am not, in connection with the text, to consider so much his life as his death—his death as the crowning glory of that long career of mercy and of love. A crown of glory was it, this death of his upon the cross. That scene upon Calvary was the highest manifestation of benevolence that the world had ever seen before or should ever see again. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for a friend.” “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die : yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

The cross of the Lord Jesus was erected outside of

the gate of Jerusalem, and he hung there between the two thieves ; but not as they did, impenitent ; not for his crimes, not because of a long life of violence and wrong, but after a life of unexampled purity, unrivaled benevolence and love. He hung not as the malefactors, but with aggravated cruelty, with grievous forms of malice and torture put upon his death which were not shown to them. And so he died ; not to testify his truth as martyrs have often died ; not even as Socrates died ; (you know how beautifully that death of his is embalmed for all time in the immortal pages of Plato ;) but as a victim—as the victim of the world's wrong, because he loved the very sinners who brought this doom upon him. It was the sin, the terrible sin for which he died, that made his death so dreadful ; it was the pain, the agony concentrated upon him by the world's sin, and laid upon his gentle, tender head, that made him shrink so in the garden : “ Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” Was it that he shrank from the agony of death ? Then would he be less than many of the martyrs whose names are blazoned on the Church's records. No ; but because of the bitterness of the cup that was presented to him ; the fearful chalice compounded of the malice of devils, of the wrath of God, of the unnumbered sins of the unnumbered millions that had passed away before his time, and the sins of all the generations of men that should follow after. That

cup he drank, and drank to the dregs. What an illustration of benevolence—sublime because godlike—was this death of Christ for a sinful world !

And now, brethren, our practical lesson for to-day is put by the apostle in this shape, “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” And further, “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.” And mark the limits and metes of this love, “As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” This was not a new law, for it was laid down in Leviticus just as strongly and clearly ; the newness of the commandment consisted in this, that we are bound to love one another as Christ loved us. How far is that ? To this extent, that he gave himself for us, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. The law put upon us as Christians is all summed up in one of those pregnant sentences which vindicate Christianity to be the religion for all time and for all men : “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” Take that sentence and look at it. Turn it over ; think of it. As Christ loved you through all his life of sorrow and suffering and pain up to that dying hour on Calvary, so should our love show itself in gentleness and kindness, and lead us over the ocean of life to the haven of everlasting rest. The law of love is the law of Christianity, pervading all possible forms of individual as well as public duty. The man who loves his God and loves

his race in the spirit in which Christ loved us can never fail in his duty.

How beautifully love lights up the scene wherever it comes ! how the atmosphere is fragrant with it in every house where it is ! Perhaps you have a child, a daughter, that has one of those loving spirits, a warm, affectionate, tender nature. What is the fruit of it ? Whenever you come into the house she is ready with a bounding step, bright eye, and tender glance to welcome you, and not you alone, for every one who comes into the room feels the influence, the really magnetic influence, which every one of so tender and loving a nature possesses. The atmosphere of the house is made brighter, sweeter, pleasanter. As she grows older she grows better, until at last her loving nature becomes transfigured into the similitude of Christ's. On the contrary, you may have a child of an unloving and unhappy nature, disposed instead of being always loving to be always chiding, always complaining. You may be such a one yourself. Let this word drop by the way. Bring before your mind the beauty of loving, and see if you cannot reform. Such a one will be always gloomy, always apparently unhappy, and never satisfied for a moment unless in the gratification of some selfish desire. What a contrast : the loving everywhere performing duty because it is simple to the heart that loves ; the morose one forgetting duty,

always giving pain. Extend the illustration ; leave the family and come into public relations, into the haunts of men, into the great world. Who have been the leaders and reformers of men but these loving, magnetic natures ? Who have carried forward mankind, except men who have had, or made mankind believe they have had, this essential, all-powerful principle ? You cannot find in the history of the world an example of permanent success without it. What a hero was St. Paul, because he had this new baptism of Christian love ! “ God forbid,” said he, “ that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.” His heart was filled with a heroism of love which enabled him to bear all things, hope all things, do all things for his Master. He went through a life of activity, never seeking repose, caring for no peril, no watching, fasting, or imprisonment, his heart always burning under the same impassioned love. In the history of the Church the men who have been its heroes and great conquerors have been men of loving hearts, men who had the spirit of Christ, and said, “ God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross ! ”

“ As I have loved you,” says the Saviour. How greatly we are bound to love each other ! to love each other without reference to character—only in this sense : I do not mean that you can love with the same

tenderness and emotion the unlovely that you can the lovely, or that you can love others as well as your own family and kin, or that you are not to have your own express and peculiar friendships—Christ had them, and sanctified the idea of friendship for all time by those loving connections he formed here upon the earth. But as Christ loved those that were ungrateful to him, as he loved those who reviled and spat upon him, and did not seek, in going to and fro, the best people, among whom to spend his time and labor, but those that needed him most, and were most despised in his time, we are to love our fellows, no matter how degraded, debased, or unfortunate, or apparently unworthy of our love, they may be. Let us say, when discouraged by men's ingratitude, "I will not be hasty, or easily disheartened or dismayed; God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of Christ." And this was part of his cross. He came to the Samaritans, and his Jewish disciples wondered. They asked if he was going to talk with these outcasts, and he turned to them and said, "The Samaritan and Jew are alike in the eye of God and alike to me." And two Samaritans came to him, and by and by he was seen in a house, not at all a house of gentility, or distinction, or refinement, and there was gathered about him such a company as might gather around me in one of the down-town hotels—by no means of the better class of hotels—pugilists,

and slave-traders, and the lowest class of men you choose to think of. How must Jewish respectability have stood aghast, even those that believed in the Lord, as they saw the Magdalene pouring the ointment upon his head and washing his feet with her tears ; as they saw him surrounded with publicans, who were more loathsome, and degraded, and accursed in their eyes than those wretches I have spoken of are to us ; and as they saw him on a certain day pass by the highway where one of those publicans and tax-gatherers, who had enriched himself by grinding the faces of the poor, was in a tree-top, when the Saviour, going up, cast his eye on the tree and cried out, “Zaccheus, come down, this day I shall lodge in thy house.” He came to seek and to save those who were lost. The richest of all lessons is given us in the parable of the prodigal son, where the older brother, who had stayed at home and done good things all his life, and felt it, and knew it, and was proud of it, when he heard that the prodigal, who had wasted his substance in riotous living, was to be brought back again, folded his arms and scowled, thinking, “This indeed is justice !” Let us beware that we do not imitate that elder brother. The prodigals are gathered by thousands all about us, within hail of our houses and homes, feeding upon husks, many of them not only living like swine, but living with swine. God calls them home and wishes us to greet them.

We find in the cross of Christ a manifestation and teacher of individual and personal *sacrifice*. Christ offered himself not for himself, but for others, and for the ungrateful and unworthy. Among those who mocked him were some who uttered a sentence they thought the bitterest and severest of taunts, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." It was not to save himself that he hung there. Oh, no ; it was not to save himself that he emptied himself of his immortal glory and dwelt in this flesh as a man ; that he bore those buffetings and scourgings, and at last died in bitterness. "Himself he could not save." What lesson do we find here for ourselves ? That if we follow Christ in this example of his, if we are to be crucified with Christ, we must empty ourselves of our selfishness, of our earnest, complete, and absolute determination to take care of ourselves first of all. Oh, how do we deceive and delude ourselves continually with a few maxims of worldly wisdom, no doubt truthful enough in themselves, to guide us. "If I do not take care of myself nobody else will take care of me." That is true, and it is a maxim of Christian prudence as well as worldly wisdom. "He that does not take care of his own household is worse than an infidel." That is true ; take care of yourselves, of your own household. Take care, however, that in doing this you do not take these two little maxims as a cover for every form of selfishness and ostentatious living, of extrav-

agant display and waste upon your children, your house, your furniture, or your mode of living. God will not be mocked in any such way. If we are to follow Christ, we are to follow him in the spirit of self-sacrifice. The cross is to the Church not merely the symbol of its faith and pledge of its salvation, but the banner under which it is to suffer, and sacrifice, and conquer, if conquer it ever shall. Some think the Church is a home in which they are to be gathered socially, and pleasantly, and happily, until they are gathered to the Church above ; that the manifestation of Christ on the cross was made solely that he might save those who believe at last, and take them home to heaven ; and those who look upon Christianity in this light are willing to let all the vast fabrics of sin exist ; if they can only creep over the battlements and get at last into heaven that is all they want. They have mistaken sadly the purpose of Christ's Church. For this the Son of man was manifest, that he might destroy the works of the devil here upon the earth, until at last there shall be nothing seen here but the glorious fabric of Christ's Church. The Church teaches us sacrifice—sacrifice every day of our lives—as the very law of our existence, because the law of our redemption in Christ.

Let us glory in the cross of Christ by imitating Christ's love and charity, his determination to do all that must be done for his great work by daily

labors for the bodies and souls of men, by meditating continually some plan by which we may enlarge the boundaries of human happiness as well as of Christ's kingdom, to make some sorrowful heart be cheered, to dry up some weeping eyes. Oh how full the world is of wretchedness! and it is ours in God to lessen it; and if we each and all do what we can the wilderness will soon take on the beauty of a garden. We are called upon to make sacrifices. You remember the answer of Nabal, in the lesson which I read this morning, to the young men of David: "I have gathered together bread and water for my shearers, and I have killed my sheep for flesh for these shearers who have been shearing my three thousand sheep; shall I take this food and give it to these strange men that I know nothing about?" Brethren, we are always tempted to fall into Nabal's sin, and think that what we have gathered is only gathered for ourselves and those that are with us and of us, or working for us. Let us avoid Nabal's sin. If we know not whence the wretched poor are that come thronging to our gates begging alms continually—the thousands upon thousands who make this vast city an abode of sin and sorrow—when the call come to us let us not say as Nabal said, "Shall I take my water and my bread and give it to these people whom I know not?" Do not do it. Remember at last Nabal's heart was turned to stone. Do not by perpetual acts of resist-

ance, when Christ calls you, cause your hearts to change to stone. It is easier for the heart to petrify than many of us dream. Gradually that heart which in early life was accustomed to open so freely and sympathize so widely learns one lesson of worldly wisdom after another, day after day that heart is turning to stone ; and when by and by the process is all complete, you wonder, perhaps, that you were ever tender at all. The constant tendency of worldliness is to petrify the feelings, and then, as men become more and more petrified, they do as sinners generally do—they glory in their shame. To know what the world is at bottom, to know how much vileness, baseness, meanness, hypocrisy, and unworthiness are in it, they think a very great achievement of experience and wisdom. God save me from such experience if it is going to petrify my heart and close my hand, if it is ever going to make me forget that blessed cross upon which Christ died, or cease to remember that that Saviour is the model of my obedience, and should be the type of my loving self-sacrifice !

The cross is not merely the type of our salvation, but the symbol of the Church militant, the flag of the Church. What a significant symbol is the flag planted over a Consul's house among savage tribes at the ends of the earth ! It is not merely a piece of bunting with the American stars and stripes, but the symbol of our sovereignty and power, of the concentrated

might and majesty of a mighty people. And so that flag upon the stern of a ship may be all tattered and torn, worn and dim, and yet, as the flag waves the fight concentrates around it ; all the men upon the ship's deck will die one by one sooner than that flag shall be torn down. Why ? Because the flag is any thing ? the bunting any thing ? the stars and stripes any thing ? No ; it is because of what the flag symbolizes. When it goes down the pride of a great nation goes down. It is, so far as it goes, a conquest and submission. Look on the field of battle at the thickest part of the fight, where men are gathered together in the fiercest storm of passion. It is about the standard, and the standard-bearer holds to that flag with the grasp of life and death, and men are all about him, fighting furiously to get it or to keep it. So, brethren, this cross of the Lord Jesus is the symbol of our religion, it is the sign of our redemption, of this vast system of goodness and power and grace by which Christ saves the world. And it is a sign and symbol, too, of our advancing host—the flag under which we are to fight for our Christ and God. And where is the thickest of the fight ? Where can it be thicker than in this very city of New York ? Here our banner we hold up, and the foe is all about us ; and if ever we are to triumph, and if at last Christianity is not to yield here, and the good are not to be overborne, and the wicked at last

not to triumph, it is because we fight and shall fight manfully and gather around the standard here, in this closest of battle-fields, and say, "God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ." And for it we will give our money, our prayers ; work for it in Sunday-schools and mission-schools, in highways and hedges ; we will go ourselves and visit the poor, and pray with the sick and dying ; or, if we cannot do these things ourselves, we will give our money to help those that do. Thus shall we be glorying in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by imitating his love and self-sacrifice.

XIV

THE PERILS OF IGNORANCE.

That the soul be without knowledge, it is not good.—*Prov. xix, 2.*

THIS passage is not an isolated one, picked out by itself merely as a text for a sermon. It agrees with the whole teaching of the word of God. The more you study that word the more you will find that this sentence is in entire harmony with all the tenor of the Scripture. If you turn to the Old Testament you will find that the earliest society organized by God was organized indeed among an ignorant people, but that it aimed in every essential feature to cultivate and train that people. It was a great scheme of education through and through—the whole Jewish polity. There is no injunction in the Pentateuch oftener repeated than this : “Thou shalt teach these things to thy children.” You will find it in a great variety of connections reiterated, almost wearisomely so, as if the lesson had to be trained into the mind and thought and habit of the people. When thou liest down and risest up, at home and abroad, anywhere, everywhere, in the public assembly, in the family, “thou

shalt teach these things to thy children." It was a training and education. So the judges and the prophets—what were they but the teachers of Israel and leaders of the people in the way of progress? Do you know of any song in praise of ignorance in the Book of Psalms? No; but many a one in honor of knowledge and wisdom. One of the lessons of the Book of Job is that knowledge is essential to faith, to a faith that shall grow and stand against temptation. Knowledge, says Job, is worthy of buying at any risk, at any cost; but it is not to be bought as men buy their possessions: "knowledge is not to be gotten for gold." And then, as to its value, he declares that "silver is not to be weighed for the price thereof." As for this Book of Proverbs, from which the text is selected, it seems to exhaust all the images in nature to illustrate the excellence of wisdom and knowledge: wisdom meaning the application of knowledge to the practical duties of life and to the service of God. In the second chapter it is said, "When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul, discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee." As for the Gospel itself, we are expressly told by our Saviour that the object of it is to bring light into the world—himself the world's light, the central sun of righteousness and truth; and this figure and this class of figures are very frequent indeed

with regard both to Christ and his Gospel. So that our text is part of the great atmosphere of the word of God and of Christ's Gospel, and we are within the scope of our Christian function in treating of it.

What, then, does the text inculcate? In the first place, this text is true of knowledge in general; that knowledge which is ordinarily called scientific knowledge, practical knowledge; a knowledge of books, of men, of things, of what is going on in the world; that knowledge which makes up the progress of civilization. That the soul be without knowledge in these things, my text, as I think the context would clearly sustain, means that it is not good. We could make this case out very readily, but it is hardly necessary to argue it before you. That God intended the mind for knowledge is patent from the very structure of the human intellect. He has given us senses as inlets of knowledge, a mind to treat of all that may come in; multiplying and increasing our knowledge by thought, and adding to it by observation; faculty upon faculty all making up that wondrous piece of electric machinery we call the mind. What do these gifts mean? Just as with all other gifts of God, so it is with these: the very giving of the gift implies that it is to be used; the very bestowment implies a corresponding duty. And where God bestows the gift it is not good to spurn it; nay, with this, as with all other of God's gifts, he who spurns it

does so at his peril. A man may go through the world very lazily and comfortably learning nothing, as ignorant and stupid at forty as he was at twenty, and at sixty as he was at forty ; nay, more so, for this is a disease that grows, but still comfortably, all the while. But what sort of man is that who has eyes, but sees not, and ears, but hears not ? who has an understanding, but uses it not ? endowed with gifts, but unconscious of his endowments ? A mere blind animal, groping on in the way of life, indeed, and, like an animal, enjoying, but that is all. That the soul be without knowledge is not good, because God meant the soul to be stored with knowledge, and has given it the means of acquisition for storing up.

And then, secondly, the acquisition of what men ordinarily call knowledge is fixed upon us as a duty not only by the structure of the human faculties, but also because it is intended that it shall go along with the moral culture and religious development, paving the way for these, and making their progress more easy than when surrounded by ignorance. *A priori*, ignorance hinders the progress of the truth in the individual case and in a community. It cannot but be the case that truth, which, to a certain extent, must be perceived by the intellect as well as received by the heart and treasured in the affections, is more likely to make its way in proportion as the mind is cultivated. Perhaps you will say, "No."

Let us take a look, then, into the history of the case and see how it is the other way. Which are the most religious nations to-day? (looking back now at the matter of fact in the case, not *a priori*, but in the opposite direction,) which are they in whom the higher knowledge of God is most extant, and most powerful, and most aggressive? Where do you find them? Among the ignorant tribes established on our western frontiers? The dense mass of ignorant people in South America? Among the teeming millions of the East, where, in dusky forms, dusky souls grope blindly, blankly upon the path of human life? Is it among these that you find the most virtue, the most obedience to law, the highest recognition of God, the purest religion? It is in vain to ask these questions. It is plain, then, that wherever you find the most enlightened people there you find the most virtuous and religious people. You may go through the whole list of the nations and will find it so. You may say, "Not so. France is the most enlightened of all nations." I grant that this is true if you speak only of the highest minds in society, of the apex of the pyramid of society. Knowledge shines brighter, as far as mere intellect is concerned, there than anywhere else. But what this text means, and what I mean, is the diffusion of knowledge among men. It may be well for France to have the highest minds at the apex of society, but it is not well for her to have

thirty-three millions of people in almost blind and stupid ignorance. Take nations in the degree of their culture, and you will find that the quiet home virtues, and those virtues near akin to religion, and, most of all, those virtues which depend upon religion and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost and reception of the truth in Jesus Christ, are most diffused wherever knowledge is most diffused. Take it in the several States of this Union, and it will hold good to a marvelous extent here. Wherever the most people can read and write there are the most members of the Christian Church, and the most useful members in proportion to their opportunities.

If we go back to the beginning of Christianity it is the same. The injunction of Christ to his disciples as he passed away out of sight was, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. No man more than Paul the Apostle obeyed this great injunction; and what was his career as a teacher? Did he go from Jerusalem away off to the banks of the Ganges among the darkest there to begin the propagation of the Gospel? Did he go far into the frozen North to seek a hospitable reception for this new faith, coming up obscurely as it had among humble men in Judea, thinking it would find its best reception"

among the ignorant? Was that the Apostle's mode of arguing and acting? Nay, brethren, he preached his first sermon in Europe, not far away upon the shores of the Baltic, but in the very centre of civilization, by a river-side, in Philippi. The first great city which he assaulted was that city which stood at the very highest point of human civilization and art, culture, and learning. Among the Athenians he proclaimed the Unknown God. At Athens, at Corinth, and above all at Rome, where the government of the world centred, and where flowed all forms and classes of intellect from all parts of the empire, these are the seats and centres of the Apostle's chosen labors. So we find in the history of Christianity, as well as upon an *a priori* view of it, this position is sustained: that the propagation of the Gospel is interwoven with (the two are mutually interdependent) and depends upon the propagation of general culture and education among the people, the diffusion of knowledge among men.

It is true, in the second place, of the higher knowledge of God, that for the soul to be without knowledge is not good. To be without the higher knowledge of God, which is appropriate for the soul, is especially a bad thing; nay, it is the worst of all bad things. For a man to be without riches it is not good; but it is not so bad a thing to get on in the world very well with very small store of

this world's wealth ; and after all, a man's life consisteth not in the abundance which he possesses. For a man to be without friends, that is a bad thing ; sad, indeed, it is to go on through the world alone ; and yet there are many men who have every opportunity of culture and wealth who do go through the world alone because they have no hearts. A man may be accidentally without friends, yet in possession of a heart, and a heart and soul given up to Christ. That man is not alone. He may be so far as outward environment goes, he may be alone as to visible companionship ; but not alone, because he has the blessed fellowship of the Saviour. For a man to be without the blessings of society, friends, and home may be a very bad thing ; but the worst of all bad things is for a man to be without knowledge of God. It is bad for the poor wretches who live at the Five Points, or the other purlieus of this great city anywhere, that they are ignorant, poor, abandoned, and have so poor a capacity and so few means of getting on ; that they cannot read, that they have no way of getting out of the murky atmosphere of vice and wretchedness in which they breathe and live out their few unhappy days ; but the worst of all is that they have no knowledge of God. The knowledge of God is the knowledge that brings peace. "Acquaint thyself with Him," said Eliphaz, "and be at peace." By this it would seem that the mere fact

of acquaintanceship with God would bring peace. How is that? He meant something more than a mere recognition of the existence of God ; that we shall come to know Him as He wishes us to know Him, and come to that higher knowledge for which all high knowledge was made—the knowledge of our relation to God as a Father, recognized and established by the blood of his Son. Mere scientific knowledge, so far forth as it is not intended for this end, first, in the individual soul, and, second, for the spread of Christ's kingdom in the earth, perishes. I do not say, as some say, that it corrupts a man ; I do not believe it does ; but it perishes in the using, and at last it will aggravate the man's condemnation when he comes to be judged. It perishes not always with the individual ; but unless the knowledge of God be added, in any community or nation, to the sciences which make up what is called the progress of civilization, that civilization, being rotten at the core, will fall to pieces by and by, and that I believe is shown in all the history of the world. The Greek civilization was not the first in the world ; the Egyptian was far older. What remains of it now? There are on the shores of the Nile those magnificent sepulchral structures which men go to gaze on for their vastness, and temple after temple whose remains are but ruins. That is all, except the mummies scattered over the earth, that remains of Egyptian civilization. So of

all the later nations ; their remains are but myths, phantoms seen in the depths of remote centuries as shadows amid the gloom of night, taking form and shape, and of no usefulness to us. Some of them have passed utterly away, so that we do not know any thing of them at all. Wordsworth has deduced the lesson of their history :

“All true glory rests,
All praise, all safety, and all happiness,
Upon the moral law. Egyptian Thebes,
Tyre by the margin of the sounding waves,
Palmyra central in the desert, fell,
And the arts died by which they had been raised.

“Call Archimedes from his buried tomb
Up to the plain of vanished Syracuse,
And feelingly the sage shall make report
How insecure, how baseless in itself,
Is the philosophy whose sway depends
On mere material instruments ; how weak
All arts and high inventions if unpropped
By virtue.”

The combination which Christianity seeks in the individual and the community is the culture of the intellect along with the culture of the heart. To combine them, each of us in his own person, is the greatest achievement we can accomplish ; to cultivate ourselves by obtaining all possible knowledge of God, and of his word and law ; all possible knowledge of human science, for human science is nothing but an exposition of God's law in some way or other ; to study the Bible, and appreciate what that great Rev-

elation contains ; to come to God and say, "Here, Lord, I will try to learn. I find I know nothing. Teach me wondrous things out of thy law." He will not let the soul lack that humbly seeks knowledge, and the more it knows the humbler it will be, putting itself down lower the nearer it gets to the vast ocean of God's knowledge. It is our duty to get to as high a point as we can in the endeavor to have our souls filled with knowledge. In the twenty-fourth chapter this wise man says : "By knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches ; a wise man is strong, yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength." Lord Bacon uttered a maxim in his day which has been in every one's mouth from that day to this : "Knowledge is power." It is but a repetition of this passage from the Proverbs : "A man of knowledge increaseth strength." Who so strong as he for evil if he chose to exert his power for evil ? Who so strong for good if he has given his soul to God, and desires to be a leader of the race in all virtuous enterprises ? The ignorant man is weak. He may be a very Titan in stature, a Hercules in brawn of muscle ; the wise man near by may be a poor, shriveled, puny, hump-backed wretch, and yet in him are all the elements of gigantic power, while the other is only a dwarf. Take the two and set them to breaking down a rock across the river at the beginning of the Palisades.

Take your giant with the brawny thews and sinews and force of muscle, and give him the aid of some of the things wise men have made—tools. To make the comparison fair, he ought to go with no tools ; but give him a pickaxe and shovel, and let him work for a year, and then let your little, shriveled hunch-back come along, and he will come with pick and shovel, and along with pick and shovel will have a tool to bore with, and in his hand a little black powder, and that powder surcharged with electric fire, and, by the help of a few matches, another thing that wise men have made, will, in a few days, do more than the other has accomplished in the whole year. So it is with the ordinary conduct of human affairs, and so it is with the progress of the Gospel of God.

A Christian man should be the last of all men to oppose the diffusion of knowledge or sing the praises of ignorance. The Christian who does this thing may be forgiven in God's infinite goodness if he trusts in the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, but he shows by the very act of doing it that he has misapprehended the first principles, the offices and aims of Christianity. There were indeed whole ages in which this doctrine was taught—that ignorance was the mother of devotion. What was the consequence ? A few men hoodwinking and managing all the rest. Priests in cowls and hoods monopolized all the learning, while kings had to

make their mark, and noblemen could neither read nor write. These men in cowls and hoods were the real rulers of the earth, and led kings by the nose, and managed the affairs of the nations at their pleasure. Whoever at this day preaches up the praise of ignorance just wishes to go back into the Middle Ages. If he is a priest, shun him; if a preacher, do not listen to him. No matter who he is, he is either an excessively ignorant or an excessively dangerous man. It is only wild beasts who prowl at night, and so whoever it is, monk or friar, or any one else, that seeks to keep the lamp of knowledge from being lit or kindled to a brighter blaze, is a beast of prey, and walks in darkness to cover his deeds of evil.

Christian men should be the very foremost in promoting the general cultivation of the people, and so promoting the knowledge of God and the advancement of His kingdom among men. It is a general opinion that the work of education must begin with the very lowest strata of society and work upward; but this plan never succeeded yet, and never can. Paul began at Athens, at Rome, at Corinth, at Philippi. The poor in these places were the persons that listened to him, it is true; but you mistake most sadly if you think the poor people in those places were stupid or ignorant. In the States of Greece there was a universal culture, and even the slaves there were

wise ; so that it would be a great mistake to suppose that they were ignorant or stupid people who first embraced Christianity. In the propagation of knowledge among men now we must work among all classes. We must have universities and colleges to be the seminaries of the broadest and most general culture ; schools and academies as preparatory for them, and public schools as preliminary to these, or as affording a broad and general basis of education for the people. And there being still a lower stratum of society, which even these means of education cannot reach, we must have our ragged schools and mission schools and tract societies to get at this lower stratum if possible, and let a few chinks of light in upon its dark gloom and wretchedness.

It takes public-spirited men to receive these truths. A Christian must be, of all men, the most public-spirited. It is a blessed thing to lead a quiet and peaceable life, but the best way to secure it for yourselves and your children is to spread Christianity, which is the only possible basis of good government. Spread and diffuse sound knowledge, a knowledge of the Gospel, a knowledge of God among the people, if you wish to have peace for yourselves and children. As for the individual, it is very comfortable to have a peaceable, quiet time. You may say, "So it is ;" but if you suppose that you are to discharge the functions of your Christianity, or even

your common manhood, by going on enjoying your own luxuries and the advantages that God has permitted you to gather into your own family circle for twenty or thirty, or even fifty years, until you become an old man, and then die and be transplanted to a heaven something like this you had upon the earth, only more durable and a little higher finished, you have not the theory even of manhood. You cannot do it and be a Christian ; you cannot do it and be a man, and thus go on selfishly regardless of the millions sinning and suffering around you. Some day these millions will come up and crush you and your children. There must be men of public spirit to lead the others. There had to be Pauls and Peters in the infancy of the Church ; there had to be Luthers, and the thousands joined with him for the Reformation, for the work of advancing the Gospel. So here there must be public-spirited men. If not you, God will raise up others. I trust it will be you—that this congregation will rise up and do the work which God puts upon it in this great city.

XV.

THE PLEASURE THAT DESTROYS.

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth ; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes : but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.—*Eccles. xi, 9.*

THE whole subject of this book of Ecclesiastes is the vanity of man apart from his immortality. The wise man takes up the various conditions and forms of human life, and estimates the different varieties of enjoyment. Pleasure, passion, appetite, ambition, the thirst for wealth—all these are enumerated and weighed as it were, and all found to be vanity and vexation of spirit. The last two chapters sum up the moral instruction of the book, which but for these would be very obscure, because the language is often ironical, decidedly and strongly so ; sometimes appearing as if commending the enjoyment of the world and making the best of it. “Thou mayest rejoice,” says one of these passages, in the first part, which is made clearly known by the latter part, “thou mayest walk in the ways of thine own heart, thou mayest delight in the sight of thine eyes. It is quite possible there

is a time for all things. Thou mayest take thy soul & fill of these things for the time being. Do it if you please, but do it at your peril." That is the spirit of the text. Thou mayest gain a large part of what the world has to give in the way of enjoyment and in gratification of the natural desires, but what will it profit thee if thou gain the whole world and lose thine own soul? In the writings of Solomon there is lesson after lesson to show that no man can gain the whole world. He can gain but a very small part in achieving the very best and highest he can, and will hold that little for a very short time. What shall it profit a man if he enjoy all he may, when he comes in the end to answer for the deeds done in the body, and has no answer to give?

We find, then, these two thoughts in the text: the first is that, although there is enjoyment in the indulgence of our natural passions and appetites, it is not the part of a wise man to go to excess in their indulgence; and whoever so indulges must remember—and this is the second point which the text brings before us—that there is an account to be given, a judgment to be rendered, and that it shall be particularly for all these things done in the body. The text is ironical, I have said. Does it mean, however, in its strong irony that there is to be no rejoicing—that there cannot be, ought not to be, cheering of the heart in youth? By no means. That is not the

spirit of the text or of the word of God throughout. The rational cultivation and development of all our powers is abundantly provided for by Christianity. We injure the religion of Christ amazingly if we cloud it always in gloom. That is a false and perverted notion of the religion of Jesus which would make it ascetic, and turn every Christian into a monk or nun. This idea led to the whole monastic system, and to all its evils and destructive results. We have no right to throw a cloud over the religion of Christ. He himself mingled with good men and bad men ; nay, we have more accounts of His associating with bad men than with good. His mission was to the bad. We read of his dining at the houses of sinners and men of notoriously bad character—publicans and tax-gatherers—men that had a worse reputation than the greatest defaulters who abound in these days. The Pharisees of the time took Him to task for it ; it was contrary to the Pharisaical religion, the dominant Jewish religion of the time. The Pharisees are not all dead yet, and are not all Jews.

We find enjoined in Christianity the proper cultivation of our faculties of mind, and taste, and even enjoyment. The sources of pleasure are open to the worldling and Christian alike. This is the difference, that the Christian, under the guidance of the law of God, gets from these sources the pure water of

enjoyment for his soul as well as for his mind, instructing him at all times, and bringing him nearer to a knowledge of God, while the worldling gathers from these sources, by using them simply and solely in reference to himself and his own individual enjoyment, poison. Plant the deadly nightshade and the violet side by side, and with the same atmosphere, sunshine, and refreshing showers, the nightshade secretes its poisonous juices while the other gathers its elements of fragrance and beauty. And so it is with the Christian man and the sinner in reference to all the sources of pleasure in this life. God's sunshine is about both. His rains fall alike on the just and on the unjust, and His blessings are scattered lavishly upon all the children of his hand. It depends upon the use they make of them whether they shall be elements of joy here and everlasting bliss hereafter, or whips and stings and scorpions to lash them with everlasting punishment. The world with all it affords is a temple for the Christian, with the arched dome of beauty above him as the vaulted nave of the grand palace, in which he is set to worship the Architect, who is at the same time his Lord and Master, who adorns the earth with beauty, and fills it with riches for the man who knows how to use them wisely for his own culture and to the glory of God. But the man who follows the light of his own eyes and gathers enjoyment simply

for himself may do it for awhile, because our nature is a very low nature in its degraded and fallen condition ; he may do it for awhile, and out of the very same elements may make himself gradually more and more beastly, and drive himself further and further away from God, until at last he becomes like the fool, and seems to say in his heart, There is no God ; the world is God, my senses are all. And so the tendency of the senses to enslave and enthrall us when we yield to them, deliberately making up our minds to follow them out let them lead us where they may—the tendency of the senses to enslave and degrade us is the first lesson taught in the word of God.

Assuredly for the unrenewed heart there may be pleasure in vice. I have heard it said unguardedly from the pulpit that there is no pleasure in sin. But if I were to say so every sinner here would give me the lie in his heart. There is pleasure for the unrenewed soul in the ways of vice, for all pleasure is the gratification of the predominant desire, whatever that desire may be. The gratification of our desires is the only pleasure we can feel. If our desires go out after God, and we have said, “Thou art the only one I have desired, Lord ; thee will I seek after ;” if this is the source of our desire as Christian people, we find our highest pleasure in the gratification of our desire of union with God. But

for the unregenerate and vicious man his desire is of the earth earthy, and the gratification of that desire is the highest pleasure of which that man is capable. That young man who was last night he knows where, doing he knows what—in the midst of those hours of passion and excitement, he went along, as it were, under the magnetism of a powerful attraction that charmed him as it drew him—he enjoyed those hours so maddening and so damning. I do not say that he enjoys them now as he sits in the Lord's house this morning and listens to His word, but he enjoyed them then. And so of all the various forms of earthly indulgence; you do not find enjoyment in them after they are over. Some find it in less rational indulgences than others. Some are given to intoxication and debauchery, and with a beastly nature they enjoy them; others find their highest enjoyments in what are called worldly pleasures and amusements. I do not say for that young man or young woman there is no enjoyment in the giddy dance, in the voluptuous waltz which men and women, pretending to be members of decent Christian society, are sometimes found to indulge in. I know as a man just what human passion is; what it is to feel the blood tingle with strong emotion, and how it draws us on. There is pleasure in these things. Rejoice, if you will, in the ways of your heart; follow, if you will, the sight of your eyes; you may enjoy it

if you will ; find in it a pleasure thrilling and exciting for a while. It may be three or four or five, or even ten or fifteen, years before your appetites shall be sated, and these things pall upon the sense. You may live a butterfly life, gaudy and beautiful, with a certain degree of enjoyment to yourself. I admit it all.

What does my text mean when it says in substance, Give up these things ? Not that there is no pleasure in the ways of vice, but that, notwithstanding the pleasures of vice, you are to abandon them ; that all these pleasures which are simply earthly and sensual—the gratification of desires which have their root only in the flesh—that all these things are inconsistent not merely with Christianity, but with the rational nature of man. What is this doctrine ? That we are to deny our natural tendencies ? Unquestionably ; control them by the Christian law, whether that law be written in the Bible or in your own physical constitution. You will find it in both. You need not read books of physiology to find out the results of vice on the human frame. Vice brings sorrow to the heart even in this life ; vice brings evil to the flesh even in this life. It is not true that God punishes sinners in this life always, or punishes them here in proportion to their sins, or inflicts moral penalties. The moral penalties are reserved for the everlasting future, and that man who thinks that the

sorrows which men bring upon themselves by their vices in this world are any portion of the penalty, or will diminish the penalty that God will inflict in the world to come, is miserably deceiving himself. Vice brings sorrow to the heart here and evil to the flesh here, and you know it. You may be a young man, and yet a very few years of dissipation have sufficed to plant evil in your flesh that you will never get rid of. You may have begun at the age of twenty with a noble, manly physical frame, with the ruddy hue of health, and with the blood pulsing through artery and vein as God meant it to do, every movement of the heart keeping time with the natural order of your life—one of the melodies of God's own creation ; and now how is it ? Sluggishly and irregularly does that tide flow through your veins, and every nerve which God meant to be the medium of thought and intelligence is at times an instrument of torture, pain here and pain there throughout the wretched frame ; and so you go on, and by and by with tremulous limbs you shall gradually approach the grave, and you will then admit that although vice may be pleasing for a time, it plants evil in the flesh and sorrow in the heart. These consequences are but the purely physical results of vice. If you were standing on the roof of this church—you may be the best man in the church or the worst—if you lean over one way or another three inches too far, or one inch, you

will fall, and no mercy of God will save you, the law of gravitation will not be turned aside—and the next moment you are a jelly on the pavement, whether you be a good man or a bad man. And so the violation of God's physical laws will come upon you in this life with physical results; but do not deceive yourself with the idea that that is any part of God's penalty. That is the strange delusion of Universalism. What a delusion! when all these results can be traced, even physiologically, to the natural operation of natural agencies! God's moral law is in the sphere of the supernatural, and all this evil of the flesh and sorrow of the heart here is only a very imperfect type of what the penalties of sin will be hereafter. The ancients understood all this natural morality. You will find as much morality in Seneca as I have given you this morning. Plato considered that the offenses of sinners take living forms after their death, and are the instruments of their punishment. These forms are sometimes assumed before death in obedience to physical laws.

What is the result of all we have to say on the subject of my text? 'Self-renunciation, self-denial, and self-sacrifice are made the groundwork of religion in the New Testament; so that if any man will come to Christ he must take up his cross and deny himself. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

Young man, who are beginning to plant these thorns in your flesh and sorrows in your heart, take that sentence home and think upon it, and make your decision to-day to be a man, and not a brute, wallowing in the sty of Epicurus. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." But oh for him that is overcome ! that goes on in evil until his moral powers have been sapped, as well as his physical ; until this unnerving process which affects him physically has penetrated into his moral nature ; until, in the feebleness which follows when his passions are strong no longer, he finds that he has no will to turn back. There is pleasure, I admit, in this world, and we may find it, but to enjoy it is to destroy ourselves.

"The pleasures and delights which mask
In treacherous smiles life's serious task,
What are they all
But the fleet coursers of the chase,
And death an ambush in the race
In which we fall !

"No foe, no dangerous pass we heed,
Brook no delay, but onward speed
With loosened rein,
And when the fatal snare is near
We strive to check our mad career,
But strive in vain !"

Let us turn to the second point which the text presents—the enforcement of this doctrine on the ground that for all these things God will bring us into judg-

ment. The simple statement that there shall be a time when all men shall be judged for the deeds that are done in the body is fearful enough, if we take the full force of it into our minds and hearts ; but the subject is presented in the Bible with every variety of illustration, every form of impressive imagery, to attract our attention and awaken our thoughts. All the physical world is ransacked to find images wherewith to force the impression of this single truth home upon us. The physical features that are assigned in the word of God to the judgment are full of grandeur, and at the same time full of terror, so that we can hardly bring up our minds to contemplate it without a strain and a sense of alarm too much for our feeble nature. Just think of it ! Generations have passed away in this world, and generations more shall pass, until the whole earth shall be filled with dead men's bones, and the sea shall wash its countless myriads of skeletons ; but the day is coming fast when all this shall be changed ; when they that are alive shall be caught up into the air, and they that are dead shall rise ! The stillness of the silent land shall be broken, its lowly dwellings and deep caverns shall re-echo the voice of the trumpet which shall sound the first note of the resurrection, the first tone of the judgment ; the stillness shall be broken, and those scattered skeletons shall come together as in the prophet's vision, shall come together bone to bone, and the flesh shall

gather on them, and the putrefaction of ages shall tremble into life! The day is coming when He shall judge the world in righteousness, and call all men forth, the living and the dead, to stand before Him. The Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, with the trump of God. What a time it shall be! when, flashing from the golden gate of heaven, the glory of that coming shall burst upon the astonished earth at midnight! Angels shall attend it, and the spirits of the just, thousands upon thousands, legions upon legions, shining afar as it comes on, that grandest procession of the universe, the procession of God coming with His Son to judge the world. And there shall be a great white throne, and Christ shall sit upon it. And then shall come that fearful final ruin when the earth shall be burned up with fire, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a parchment scroll. Men shall be seated in crowded rooms then even as we are now, many of them in temples of worship, and the first warning, coming along with that shrill trumpet note, shall be the yielding of the opening walls, and temples and inmates together shall be whelmed in the ruin; but no death shall be there amid the universal wreck, for those that are dead shall live, and none living shall die. And upon that night the earth, spinning upon its axis its last fearful revolution, shall shake off in its rapid flaming whirl its vast freight of

living souls upon the wide abyss ; and not only the living, but the dead shall come, summoned from graves and charnel-houses, from mountain tops and valleys, from wild deserts and kingly mausoleums ! And the sea shall give up its dead. The coral banks far down in its mighty depths shall be alive with beating hearts, and in that last ocean storm the wide waves shall yawn apart for their coming ; and they shall throng forth and join to swell the mighty mass of life struggling onward tumultuously in the darkness, onward and upward, ever upward, toward the great white throne, the judgment-seat !

These merely physical statements, however, afford but an imperfect picture of what the real facts shall be. The parting walls of temples, the wreck of the heavens and the destruction of the earth, the bursting of fires and flames and thunders, are nothing but types of that eternal ruin which shall come upon the ungodly ; nothing but types of that moral power which God will bring to bear upon them. If the physical terror were all it would be nothing. There are men who will brave the mouth of the cannon in battle without fear, and there is no shape of mere physical danger and peril that men will not dare to meet in their wickedness ; and if this were all you might say, "We can stand it." But these are but the outside forms of the real, individual, personal judgment. "Know thou, that for all these things God will bring *thee* into judg-

ment." Not the world, thousands upon thousands, and millions upon millions of human beings ; God will bring *thee* to judgment for all these things. For all what things ? Why, for those days that you have wasted in the pursuit of sin and folly, those things in which you have gone after the desires of your own heart and the delight of your own eyes ; for those sins you have committed against God and your own soul ; for your terrible self-indulgence ; for that act of dishonesty, that crime against your neighbor, that sinful compliance with the world in any of its shapes ; for that false ambition that led you to sacrifice your own manliness and truthfulness in politics or trade to rise above your fellows—for all these things God will bring you into judgment.

There will be no escaping it. Here you may escape your deserts and get on plausibly with a smooth face for years and years, and appear fair without, and be nothing but filth and rottenness within. There will be no escaping or evading then. Here we can surround ourselves with disguises ; but when that time shall come every man shall stand naked before God just as he is. He shall not be able to compare himself with this man or that man and say, " He did worse than I did ; he followed his course longer than I did ; if I did wrong I had company." You may say that here, but not there. God will judge you for these things ;

the judgment will be personal, individual, and covering all the acts of your life.

Thou shalt thyself be the witness on that day. Here, we are not to criminate ourselves when charges are made against us. We are not called upon in any case to testify against ourselves ; and very often our offenses are concealed, our shame is hidden, and we go on and men know nothing of what we are in our secret souls. When that judgment comes we shall have to stand and tell our own story without evasion, without keeping back a part of it, without cloaking or dissembling or giving excuses. I do not say that God will not know the excuses, and take them into account for our poor miserable infirmities ; but you and I will have to tell the whole story, beginning at the beginning and going on to the end, for every man shall give an account of himself before God. You will not be witnessing there against your fellows, but against your own soul—forced to give the whole account of all your secret sins, all your mean, degrading vices, all your acts of selfishness, all your forgetfulness of God ; you will have to tell it all. Written upon your own memory all these things will be. We forget our vices as we do our dead friends ; they are overlaid with layer after layer of the occupations, the sorrows, the enjoyments of life, until away down at the bottom we have almost forgotten them, and it seems to us as if they had never

been. It requires some awakening, some touch of the Spirit of God, to make us think of them at all. Upon that day when you come to give an account of yourself before God you will find that your mind has preserved them all, that they are daguerreotyped there, and in the strong light which shall stream from the Son of God they will all come out again. The colors for a time may have faded, but that sunlight will bring them back.

Young men, young women, who are listening to me to-day, I pray you get out of the atmosphere of mere worldliness and fashion—what an atmosphere it is! If there is any environment which can degrade a human being or harden a young heart, it is the atmosphere of merely fashionable life. You may take the tenderest and most beautiful and lovely girl, the one that is kindest at home, and loves her father and mother best, and put her into the highest circle of fashionable life, with plenty of money and plenty of scope to do as she pleases; let her dress herself as she will; cover herself with diamonds and pearls, costly silks and laces; let the love of admiration become the controlling passion; and by and by all the tenderness of that young nature passes away; her thoughts concentrate upon herself, what figure she is cutting, who her admirers are, what conquests she can make; and by and by the youthful, beautiful modesty is gone, and the way is open

for vice that in the beginning would not have been dreamed of, or, if thought of, put away as utterly impossible. And in the end perhaps there comes a wreck and a ruin, a murder perhaps. Or all this may be hidden, and it is only a wreck within that the world does not know of ; it is only a ruin of a precious soul, a murder of a young heart, and the world has never heard of it. Christian parents, think of these things, and when you are tempted to think that fashion must be the atmosphere for your children because you have got money, remember that it were far better that your money should perish than that they should pass through this flame of temptation. Gather beautiful things around your own home ; get your children to cultivate the arts that adorn home and beautify the character. Let them learn—not sham learning, pretending to a little ornament of art where there is but tinsel on the outside—give them the best education you can. At the same time accustom them to simple pleasures. Let them see that the ways of this world in the highest fashionable society are the ways that take hold on death. And then it may be, by the blessing of God through Christ his Son, that, when the judgment comes, you and they shall have nothing to fear.

XVI.

THE SIN OF SINS.

And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, because
they believe not on me.—*John xvi, 8, 9.*

THIS passage sets forth the work of the Holy Spirit in its relation to the world. It teaches that the world of itself does not, in fact, know what sin is. A man never learns what sin is except by the Spirit of God working within him. And this is in accordance with all experience. Each man's conscience has some light. No matter how degraded he may be, no matter how vile, as long as he retains his senses he has some consciousness of guilt in wrong-doing, but never a substantial practical sense of the necessity of reformation until the convincing power of the Holy Spirit has performed its work in the heart.

You will observe from the text that the Holy Spirit is not sent to convince man of the sinfulness of the transgression of God's law in the obvious and outward way. It is not of sin in its outward show that the text speaks. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." The thief knows it is wrong to steal without

any operation of the Holy Ghost ; the adulterer practices his devilish arts of seduction in the face of a re-proving law and in spite of an accusing conscience ; he does not need the Holy Ghost to inform him of the evil of his course : and so I might go through the whole black catalogue of open sins. They had all been reprov'd by the law of God, by the law of nature, by the laws of men, before the coming of the Paraclete. The Holy Spirit has a higher mission ; its function is not to enumerate our actual sins, or even to show us how flagrant they are, but to point out the deep hidden root from which all sin springs. Christ sums up the whole indictment against mankind in one single comprehensive sentence. The Holy Spirit will come, and when He comes He will convince the world of sin ; not because they are swearers, liars, cheats, or murderers ; not because they are ungrateful, unholy, or blasphemous—none of all these are mentioned. “When He is come He will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me.” That is the summing up, as if He had undertaken to grasp all there is of human wrong and crime and evil and bring it together in this one utterance, and say that the Holy Ghost shall come and convince men of this in the first place in order to their reformation of this one great sin, as the root of all other sins, that they may repent of this unbelief of theirs and turn and live.

And the passage has also this other meaning, that, if the Holy Ghost fails in thus convincing in order to reformation, the Holy Ghost will have that other work to do of accusing unto condemnation—accusing the world of unbelief and proving the accusation—so that the world shall go at last into its own place, the place of the unbelievers. “He that believeth not shall be damned.”

The lesson of the text then is, that the want of faith is the sin of sins, the master sin of mankind. To convince the world of this the Spirit of God must come. Conscience does not accuse us of such a sin ; it accuses us of violations of the Decalogue ; but we go on year after year in unbelief, and never think of that as a sin. There is not a man in this house who has not been converted to God by the power of the Holy Ghost who has ever thought of his unbelief as a sin. We accuse ourselves of the ordinary transgressions of life, but the sin at the bottom of all, the unbelief, that we do not think of. And this is one of the reasons why the Holy Ghost was sent to convince the world of unbelief. There is no other accuser ; conscience does not accuse us, the law does not accuse us. And yet nothing can be truer than that, since God has revealed himself in Christ, the great sin of the world is that it rejects Christ.

Let us look into this sin, and see in what consists its flagrancy. Shall I say that unbelief, first of

all, introduced sin into the world? that the very first act of transgression was an act of unbelief? that this was the beginning, the root, the primal source of that act of disobedience which "brought death into the world, and all our woe?" With what craft did the devil assail our mother Eve! "You shall not eat of the fruit nor touch it, lest you die," was the commandment. "No," said the tempter, "you shall not surely die; but in the day you eat thereof your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods." What was the temptation here? The temptation was, in the first place, to shake Eve's faith in God. "Do not believe what has been told you; it is not so; you shall not surely die; God has threatened that you shall, but the whole amount of it is that if you give up this absolute unquestioning faith I have something better to substitute for it; if you only come to disbelieve in God, and cease your trust in him, you shall find by and by that you shall be gods, knowing good and evil. That shall be the produce of this rich fruit." Thus in the very beginning, in the opening act of the drama of humanity in this vast theatre of the world, the original temptation was to substitute reason for faith. Instead of believing and, in humble trust, obeying—obedience is ever the fruit of trust, and never is where there is no trust—instead of trusting and because of trust obeying, the temptation was to disbelieve and, in

disbelief, to disobey; and the bait held out was knowledge. "Why go on with this blind, groping faith, not knowing whither you go? Eat of this tree, and you shall be as gods, wise—Oh, how wise!" That was the primal temptation and source of the primal fall, and from that day to this that has been the seat and center of all the devil's temptations, the beginning of all man's sins. It was God's original decree that the moral union between the creatures He had made and Himself should be maintained by this bond of faith. It was faith that, before the fall, kept Adam united to his God, and when that trust was shaken, when the first breath had sullied this mirror of perfect confidence in which the Almighty's face was always reflected for him, the seeds of sin were sown; and what a bitter harvest has humanity for these six thousand years been reaping! six thousand years of crime and wrong, oppression multiplying upon oppression, an increasing tide of rebellion against Almighty God, and all caused by our believing in ourselves and in any thing else but God. The whole race was separated from God.

After all, in spite of this want of faith and this disobedience, God was merciful, and in the councils of His infinite wisdom made provision for the sins of the world, and sent His Son a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours alone, but for those of the whole world. And with a beautiful propriety, with

an even poetical justice, so to speak, as an act of unbelief was the cause of the primal transgression, so, naturally and justly, an act of faith is required as the very element and condition of reunion. "Believe again," is the message; "I tried you in the garden; you disbelieved me then, and now I send you my Son, that you may get back again some of that pristine purity, that you may come back into relations with God by faith; come now and believe." That is the door by which alone we can enter into the palace of refuge which God has prepared in Christ Jesus his Son. And now, is it not clear that unbelief in Jesus Christ is the greatest of sins, because it cuts off this union with God? There is no such thing as virtue apart from God; there is no godliness where there is no God; and they that are without faith are without God in the world—orphaned in this grand universe of which the Architect is ready to be every man's father; going about blind, fatherless, hopeless, "without God in the world." And yet *God offers Christ as the means of restoration.* To reject Him, can it be otherwise than the beginning of sin—to reject the only hope of getting back to God?

I have said enough to show that unbelief is the worst of all sins, the root of all sins, the basest of all sins. You may say this is all argumentative and inferential, but it is far from being so, and if you want

something plain and direct, go to the law, and see what it says. What is the command? That we live virtuously, keep ourselves free from idolatry, avoid theft, lies, and murder, and the other crimes forbidden by the commandments? No. 1 John iii, 23: "And this is his commandment; That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." And then, further, as stated in the first Epistle of John and fifth chapter—and if there be any unbeliever here, as I fear there may be, I hope he will listen to these words: "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

In rejecting Christ you *make God a liar*. The highest insult you can pay to the majesty of heaven these words embody. Have you ever thought of their full meaning? To compare small things with great, is there any insult among men so extreme as this? Is there any man who will bear to be told that he is a liar? Among men of the world to be charged directly with falsehood, is it not considered an insult to be wiped out in blood? And is it not the case that men who are gamblers and debauchees, so vile as hardly to be fit to live, will defend their claim to veracity at the sword's point or the pistol's

mouth? Is there any thing that wounds your heart and goes into your soul like iron, piercing and penetrating, and numbing and paralyzing at the same time, like the knowledge that your dear child tells you a lie? that you cannot trust its word? that it is false to you? Would any thing so effectually destroy your child's confidence in you as to believe that you are a liar? Why is this? Because this principle of faith runs through all God's government, through all the relations between God and man, and between man and man in society. If men are not true to each other then "Chaos is come again." If you are not true to your fellow, you can have no relations with him; if you do not believe your child and he you, you are no longer father and son; you are aliens and foreigners, bound by no tie except it be a chain which galls you both. So there is no relation between God and man where there is no faith; all intercourse is cut off. There is no bridge between heaven and earth but this. So, my brethren, God brings as the acme of his accusation against you, your unbelief, proving it to be the vilest and extremest of sins; since, in this disbelief of yours, you charge the lie upon Almighty God. You may sit in your pew in your unbelief, and, though accomplished and outwardly fair to look upon, loving and kind, yet, if the truth were told, you are every day thrusting your rebellious hand into the face

of Almighty God and telling him he is a liar. It means that and nothing else.

Again, unbelief is the greatest of all sins because it offers the grossest indignity to Christ the Redeemer. What was the object of Christ's coming? That "whosoever *believeth on Him* might have everlasting life." John iii, 16. In all the four evangelists you will find that the complaint made of His friends, of His kindred, is not that they are sinners. He does not marvel or complain of this, but He marvels and complains because of their unbelief. And what was the unbelief of that time to our unbelief, crucifying, as we do, the Son of God afresh, in despite of the two thousand years and its accumulated testimony—rejecting His cross, and putting Him to an open shame by refusing to believe on Him? And, therefore, this is the condemnation—not that men break the ten commandments; for this the law will come upon them, the law which will demand its penalty, the law which pursues and knows no mercy, which always presents the same front of stern, relentless determination, and will one day claim its own. But this is the condemnation coming out of Christ's own lips—that "light has come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

Are we not ready to believe that disbelief is the source of other sins? Cut off from God by

Adam's sin, and cut off from Christ by our own unbelief, what elements of goodness have we? what means of being good or doing good? and to whom can we go? We are doubly separated and distanced from God, and to whom shall we go? With what hope of virtue shall we pass through this world? Shall we go to the lessons of the world? the teachings of philosophy? the instruction of books? the lessons of nature? These are poisons for us; they report to us falsely, or, wherein they do report correctly, they fall upon heedless ears, because there is in us the evil heart of unbelief. The Bible sums it up in a sentence: "The heart of unbelief is evil," Heb. iv, 2; and as the heart is so is the life. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." What a world of philosophy in a single utterance! What a volume of ethics and morals compacted into one brief proposition! If yours be an evil heart of unbelief, if you have no relation to God by Christ, no hold upon the everlasting throne, your heart is evil, and out of that evil heart nothing good can come. You cannot gather grapes from thorns, nor autumn figs from thistles. If the fountain be bitter, bitter must be the waters.

"Unto them that are unbelieving nothing is pure: but even their mind and conscience is defiled." Titus i, 15. This is very severe language; severe, but true. You may have the elements of natural

virtues in your constitution, and they may bloom in the fair and beautiful fruit of this world; you may have a superior intellect, and you may learn certain maxims of worldly prudence that will carry you on. There may be a fair outward fabric of morality in you. God restrains the evil that is in the natural heart in order that the experiment of society may go on. Now and then it breaks out in acts of violence, abnormal and irregular, at which men stand aghast—proofs that the normal state of things is a habit of subjection, and that, in order that God's problems may be wrought out among men, and that the kingdom of God shall subsist in the earth at all, and have any fair play among men, it is necessary that the outbreaking of sin should be restrained—and yet the deep root remains in every unbelieving soul. You, as a personal individual, have all the elements of all possible sin within you. God's grace restrains it now, or good education. Good habits, good homes, good laws, prevent you from falling into many sins. And yet if you do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ no person can say what temptation you shall fall into. "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" said Hazeal of old; and men have been repeating the saying ever since. Yet if the curtain of the future could be rolled up, some act of flagrant shame, some vile, debasing lust, some act

of wrong, some theft, or cheating of your employer—who knows that such shall never happen? You do not. The root is within you of all these. The only safety for you is in getting into union with God through Christ by a living faith. The evil heart of unbelief, get that out of you, and there is a chance, nay, a certainty, that the waters will be pure as the fountain is pure. The outward action only men judge; the world sees that, and sees nothing more. So the mighty stream of evil and wrong rolls on year after year, and generation after generation, and men wonder where these mighty waters come from, so dark, threatening, and poisonous. The hidden source, the unbelief, they cannot see. The evil heart of unbelief is not taken out of the world, and out of the evil heart nothing but evil can spring.

And now, if you are an unbeliever, you are committing all possible sins; the roots and seeds of all possible sins are there. Why is it so? Why, if you profess the Christian name, are you only half a believer? A too great regard for this world is probably one cause, if not the only one. “How can ye believe who receive honor one from another?” John v, 44. And the Apostle Paul says, “If our Gospel be hid it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God,

should shine unto them." 2 Cor. iv, 3, 4. Oh, that is not my temptation ! Is it not ? You are a practical unbeliever in the Lord Jesus Christ. Your life, habits, property have not been consecrated to God. Why not ? Ask your own heart, and see if the honor that comes of your fellow-men is a thing you do not covet. I do not speak of a desire for political honors ; but how is it about the position you hold, your intelligence, wealth, influence in society, your style of living, equipage and ornaments, and show in the world ? Are they not for your own personal comfort ? Do you build your palace that Christ may be enthroned and worshiped in the bosom of your family ? It is because you seek honor one of another that you have so little faith ; because the god of this world dazzles you, as he always dazzles them that obey him and are his followers. You will say, "I believe in Christ and come to church every Sunday ; I shall certainly be saved." And yet you believe more in yourself, your children, your property, and ability to get property ; and the longer you go on in this course of disobedience the delusion becomes greater, according to the declaration of Paul, that "at last they shall be given up to strong delusion, to believe a lie ; that they all may be damned that believe not the truth, and have pleasure in unrighteousness." 2 Thess. ii, 12. Strong delusion ! how many of us are under it ! We believe in pleasure, particu-

larly if we are young people, before the flush and heat and fire of youth are gone. We believe in our earthly possession, in friendship, love — strong delusions that you are given over to believe ; a lie that you believe. “I hear of a friend dying on this hand and on that ; but it does not come to me. I am to live for a certain length of time.” Strong delusion, my friend ; you are given over to believe a lie. We cannot live long ; and we do not know how short our lives may be. And so I might go on through the catalogue of vain conceits that we practice upon ourselves.

The great danger of this sin lies in its very subtilty and ability to evade our recognition of it. A man can find out about outward sins ; other people will tell him, and at all events they are obvious. But this little fountain, hidden away down in some recess of the soul, this primal origin of all sins, sends forth its streams of death-giving waters, and is never itself suspected. Thus we reject and dishonor Christ. How can I dishonor Christ ? you may say. Do you not tell me he is God, and has all power in heaven and earth ? Yet it is just so. Christ himself cannot help you without the act of belief on your part. “He did not many mighty works there.” Why ? “Because of their unbelief.” And so, my friend, I say that you dishonor Christ effectually, and disarm Him so that He cannot perform the miracle of bringing you out

of darkness into His marvelous light, which He is anxious to perform, because of your unbelief. It keeps you from God, and keeps you where you are. If unbelief seizes upon a young man who might otherwise be the fairest sacrifice on the altar of God, it makes him a vain fopling, stupid and empty-brained, and more than empty-hearted—for such are all that reject Christ in spite of all the advantages and accomplishments that may be heaped upon them—a follower of fashion, imitating all the foolish changes it exhibits because they are changes, and disbelieving the eternal truths of the Gospel. Unbelief in God, attended by the utmost belief in the milliner; unbelief in Christ, attended by the most implicit faith in whoever leads in modes of dress or modes of life; believing in all the shows, and rejecting the substance! And those of us who go into the world of fashion know that if there be any world in which there is no God it is just that world; that if there be any world in which the human heart is hardened most effectually and kept hard, it is that world; that if there be any being on the face of the Lord's earth selfish, heartless, without sympathy, thinking only of personal and individual ends and achievements, it is the world's man or woman of fashion. And all these are unbelievers, followers of the changing fashion of this world, but not of the unchanging God.

If you are living in this unbelief, I close with the prayer to God that He may break that heart of stone. The end of such a life must be corruption and death, no matter how beautiful it may be now. The Holy Ghost comes to you to-day and speaks through my feeble voice, and says, "I convince you of sin because you believe not in Him." Belief in the Lord Jesus Christ shall make you whole ; His bleeding heart shall take you in ; He is ready to take you to himself and make an end of your unbelief. Do not deceive yourselves by thinking that you can build up a character without the influence of the Holy Spirit. The root is the unbelief, and as long as that is there you need not attempt to cut down the branches. The ailanthus tree, if cut down in the autumn, will present in the spring a flourishing group of young trees ; so it is with the deep, budding, life-giving, yet death-producing, root of your sins. You may cut down outward shows of sin, but leave the unbelief at the bottom, and you shall see a plentiful crop of vigorous shoots coming up again. Begin at the root !

XVII.

THE WISDOM OF CHILDHOOD.

In malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.

1 Cor. xiv, 20.



THE doctrine of the text is that the child-like simplicity of Christianity is quite compatible with the development and use of the understanding, and that both these are essential to the full maturity of the Christian character. The doctrine is precisely the same as that contained in Christ's injunction to his disciples, "Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves." As far as the use of the understanding is concerned, the parable of the unjust steward inculcates the same lesson. Christ Himself recommends to the children of light the wisdom which characterizes the children of the world. Be children in wickedness, be men in understanding; be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. These are the maxims of the Christian life as here enjoined. That is a very beautiful passage in the life of Christ, repeated by three of the evangelists, in which he sets

forth the child-like element as the type of a true and genuine follower of Christ, when they brought to Him young children that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked those that brought them ; but Christ said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." And the application is in these words : "Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in nowise enter therein." Mark the comprehensiveness of the utterance ! In nowise can a man enter into the kingdom of heaven unless he come as a little child. This implies that the kingdom of God is an invisible and spiritual kingdom, and that to enter into it this disposition of heart is necessary, namely, the child-like spirit—a spirit free from crime and self-will, receiving the divine blessings as they come in humble dependence and submission. The doctrine is—in a single sentence—that all the qualities which make childhood beautiful are to be prolonged into the mature life, and, under the guidance of the developed reason of the adult, are to be illustrated in all the relations between man and his Maker. Whatever the traits of childhood that are so admirable—not all the traits, certainly, because one of the traits of childhood is ignorance, and this is the very thing against which the latter part of the text guards us ; not the intellectual qualities of the child, not its weakness in any shape ;

but its innocence, its gentleness, its loving nature, its benevolence and simplicity of aim : these, which are in fact modifications of the same thing—the word innocence embodying them all—are the elements which are to be prolonged into the Christian life. These are quite distinct from feebleness or cowardice. Feebleness may make us love the child because it makes it dependent upon us, but feebleness itself is not beautiful. We are only to be children so far as freedom from vice, from malice, from all forms of wrong feeling, of wrong thinking, and wrong acting is concerned. The child has not learned these yet ; it is unsophisticated, it trusts, it believes, it tells the truth. The child only learns to distrust by finding itself deceived, only learns to lie by being lied to. It takes every utterance of yours for a divine utterance, because you stand to your child in the place of God. Its teachers are apostles for it, and their sayings are inspirations. It is only when the child finds that the apostle it has trusted in, so far from being an apostle, is a cheat and swindler ; that the parent it has trusted as the embodiment of all truth, all virtue, and elevation of character, deceives it ; it is only when the gods of the child's idolatry are rudely shattered to pieces before its little eyes, that it begins to learn and know how false is the world in which it lives. Imposed upon it, induced upon it, laid upon it, are these evil

habits rather than born with it. What is born with it is the tendency of a rebellious will, but that is quite a different thing from the evils of which I have been speaking. What the Saviour means in saying that we must be like little children is, that we must be free from that malice which is superinduced by communion with a bad and wicked world. We are to be like the little child in truthfulness.

“ He hath no skill to utter lies,
His very soul is in his eyes ;
Single his aim in all, and true,
And apt to praise what others do.”

He goes straight to the point without sophistication. We are to be infants, as far as all malice is concerned, as the infant that hangs on its mother's bosom, and looks up trustfully and affectionately and believingly into her face. Oh how lovely childhood is ! Who is there that does not love a child ? Who, except the man whose heart is seared by misfortune or by crime ? If it be not so, he is a most unhappy being. Childhood is the type of innocence, tenderness, gentleness, and all the beautiful elements of Christianity. .

Our text says, “ Be children in malice ”—having no more aims, plots, plans, contrivances, devices than childhood. It is the characteristic of genius to carry forward the freshness of childhood, the freshness of the admiring eye that sees perpetually novelty in all

things, in air and sea, in sun and moon and star throughout the year, in man and woman—perpetual novelty and beauty and freshness—that is the characteristic of genius it is said. So it is only men of genius who are poets and creators, because they only carry forward this freshness of the eye, and this perception and appreciation into hoary age; the common eye becomes dim and common faculties blunted. To preserve this freshness in the moral world is the province of the Gospel. We do not need to be men of genius to carry forward child-like tenderness of feeling into our robust manhood, or onward to weary age. God's grace can give us this rich endowment if we seek Him with true hearts, and have a single eye and aim, which is the whole essence of child-like simplicity of character. A single aim! How often is it recommended in the Scriptures! "If thine eye be single thy whole body will be full of light." It is our mixed and divided aims and purposes that keep us so far from the Gospel life and Gospel character—striving to serve God and mammon, to secure a reversion in the skies and keep what we can in this world. It is because the world is so much with us that we have not this simplicity, this gentle, child-like tenderness. My brother, my friend, try for a little while, trusting in God, to keep a single eye and aim to his glory; try it for one week; trust in Christ to give right

aims, and not let them mix with your natural desires. You cannot serve God and mammon. You cannot touch pitch and not be defiled. The river Mississippi comes from two main branches. One of them springs far up in the North, and goes down over its rocky bed for hundreds of miles, and the other, passing through an alluvial soil for many miles, gathers as it passes, every hour, some new deposit of soil ; and the two streams coming together, rush both of them strongly on, the pure on one hand and the turbid on the other, and for awhile roll on side by side without commingling, and you can see them as they go, the turbid river here, the bright river there. By and by, if you watch them, you will see the turbid water gaining the victory, soiling more and more and more the whole stream, until at last the two streams, blending into one foul mixture, roll on undistinguishable to the gulf. If we keep our eye single, simple, and sincere, our whole body will be full of light ; we shall be God's then, we can be child-like all the way through to the end ; if not, our character at the best is a mixture of the bright and dark, pure and impure, and these two parts of our character will become, by and by, so mingled together that the by-standers cannot distinguish the origin of the one from the other. Let us cultivate this child-like simplicity of character. How exquisite it is, and how attractive, when we find it in the Christian life

and in common society ! How all men look up to those who as exhibit this simple, child-like, Christian life ! Any young man, any middle-aged man, any old man of such a character is a centre of light, quoted as an example, appealed to as a model for imitation ; men's hearts go to them, they cannot tell why, but they cannot refuse to let them go. There is a wonderfully attractive power in the Christian life in this its most lovely and beautiful form. The first lesson of the devil with a boy is to get him to be ashamed of his innocence ; and when he succeeds in this, when he gets a young lad to be ashamed of his good habits, and the maxims which his father and mother have been for years endeavoring to fix upon his mind, that lad is in terrible and imminent peril. To be ashamed of one's very virtues — how sad this is ! Yet we see people every day ashamed of the good which they feel struggling within them. They go out among worldliness and wicked passions, and attempt to hide and cover up that which is their chiefest beauty and loveliness. Let not the devil have that first child-like purity of yours. If you can keep it into your manhood, and go on into the mature Christian life without ever having tasted of the cup of this world's evil passions, how much more beautiful your Christian life ; how happier here even, and how much happier hereafter, that you shall have nothing to reflect upon or recollect of evil or of

wrong ! It is an inestimable blessing for any young man to keep his purity, gentleness, and simplicity all through life.

With this child-like simplicity of character we are to unite manliness of understanding. Paul says in the thirteenth chapter, "When I was a child I spake as a child, understood as a child, and thought as a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things." Your child-likeness is to be confined to the moral nature ; beyond that, in the region of the intellect, the will, the activities, you are commanded and summoned as Christians to be men. This is not quite the idea that some people have of Christianity and Christian life. There are some people, who ought to know better, who have an idea that to be a Christian it is not at all needful that a man should cultivate his mind or understanding. Rather it has been thought in certain ages, and by some people now, that an ignorant man will get on quite as well, and perhaps a little better, without any thing like courage and manliness in the use of the understanding ; and that the employment of the means which God gives us is, perhaps, a little hindrance in the Christian life. There is nothing like pusillanimity, mental or moral, in Christianity. Self-imposed penalties and inflictions for the alleged purpose of purifying the moral nature are against the spirit of Christianity, weakening the

moral power, crippling our ambition to do well, our purposes and aims of greatness, and, it may be, crippling our religious courage. It is to develop the whole powers of body, mind, and soul to their fullest operation in this life, that Christ came to prepare his chosen ones here for a glorious immortality of service and blessedness hereafter. We are called upon to be men, not children or weaklings, but sturdy, vigorous, self-reliant, clear-headed men, as far as the means are given to us ; cultivating our intellect, and applying it to whatever is practicable ; taking up our opinions and principles not upon hearsay, except when we receive the testimony of those better informed and better able to form a judgment than ourselves, and when we have formed our opinions adhering to them ; not blown about by every wind of doctrine of those who go about with all sorts of sleight of hand in order to deceive ; not full of weakness, imbecility, and credulity, nor yet of skepticism—for these two extremes are the opposite poles, and between them lies the true mean of manly Christian understanding ; not believing every thing that is told to us, or preached to us, or written at us, and not disposed to distrust every man and every sermon and every book, but endeavoring, with the clear, definite use of our own mental faculties, to get at right views, and then maintain them steadfastly and manfully. How

beautiful is the connection between these two elements of Christianity! Bacon said in reference to the field of science that it is only the reverent and docile understanding that is ever to gain access to the kingdom of nature. You will find among your acquaintances that the best cultivated men are the least conceited; the pedantic are men of less understanding; when they get into a higher level, there comes along with culture more and more of this child-like simplicity of which I have been speaking; because the more a man learns of the order of nature the more he is conscious of his own imperfect grasp of all these great topics. Then let us, in our Christian life and in our intercourse with men, remember that God has given us, on the one hand, a moral nature, in which we are to keep by faith and humble prayer our child-like simplicity, and on the other hand an understanding, which we are to use in the battle of life; and if we do not use it, we must be responsible for the neglect; and if we misuse it, we must be responsible for that. It is a great guilt in any man to allow what mental faculties he may possess to become rusty from disuse, or to submit them implicitly to another. To submit to others who have information which you have not is a mark of sagacity. Men in business, or in literary pursuits, know how to judge of the amount of evidence upon which they can rely, and when they

should give up their own judgments to others ; and have a sort of intuitive sagacity in finding the man who can be trusted ; but that is a different thing from what is called pinning your faith to any man's coat sleeve, or taking any man's *dicta* in all things. " In malice be ye children, but in understanding be men ;" and use this faculty of thought which God has given you upon the great problems of life ; in the practical business of life, upon the doctrines of the Gospel, on what you read and hear ; and in all things cultivate manliness of understanding.

This manliness of understanding implies also progress and advancement in the field of scholarship. The true scholar thinks not of what he has done, but directs his thoughts to what he has to do. Though not all called upon to be scholars or investigators of nature, there is no one of us called upon to be stupid or ignorant. Every one can add some little item to his stock of knowledge every day. Let us see that we do ; this is one great ingredient in manliness of understanding. Bacon's remark is quite applicable to study in the field of knowledge ; there is never any collision between a pure and simple soul and a strong intellect in the same nature. There may be intellectual difficulties, and it is not the policy of wisdom to frown them down or trample them under foot. If they be real absolute difficulties, get a solution if there is a solution, and if there be none there is no

difficulty ; that which is a difficulty for the whole race is no difficulty for you personally. If you are studying the doctrine of Providence, and cannot reconcile the freedom of your own individual will with the providence of God—I have never got over it—is that any reason why we should surrender our trust in God ? or surrender our intellect and say, “ Because I cannot overleap this barrier I will have no confidence in my own intellect hereafter ? ” There is a wall of adamant that bounds all human intelligence, and whenever we have reached it it is the part of wisdom to say, “ Clearly that is the limit ; I can go thus far and no farther.” The man who tries to penetrate it meets with no better success than breaking his own head against the wall. There is no wisdom, no manliness of understanding in that. But within that limit it is our duty, each of us, to be men. When we find that an insoluble difficulty comes up, admit that it is only because we are men that it is insoluble ; the difficulty is not in our individual nature, but in the nature of the race. God has put our understanding within us as his lamp ; it is a light which he has put there ; but it is a lamp which we ourselves must keep supplied with oil ; if we do not nourish the flame, God will not keep it alive. If you do not use your intellect in your business and intercourse with men, in reading and in studying the Scriptures, your capacity of judging will become

less and less vigorous, and if you do not increase the stores of your own knowledge the lamp will burn dimmer, and instead of a bright white light a dim flame will arise, and at last no flame at all, not even smoke, will survive, and all will be cold and dead. Keep it alive, that lamp of God, for your own sake, and the sake of Him who gave it!

Young men ought to be manly and self-reliant, as far as is compatible with humility and child-like simplicity. Be manly—not in supposing that you know a great deal ; you do not ; young men cannot know a great deal ; knowledge comes by experience, by study, by years ; it does not come by nature or by instinct. You can get it by industry, by perseverance, by loving it, but not by simply thinking that you have it. Do not suppose that in urging you to be manly in understanding you are urged to be conceited ; quite the reverse. Manly character is manifested in acquisition. You can acquire more knowledge between ten and twenty than between twenty and thirty ; nay, the first ten years are the years of greatest acquisition, and perhaps in the first two one learns more than in any two that follow. A little babe knows nothing. It opens its eyes upon a whole vast universe of mystery. It knows nothing ; it has to learn the air and light, and all the elements that surround it, and all the objects in the wide world, beginning with the room about it. What a wil-

derness of objects are about it, all of which it must learn ! It knows nothing of distance ; it does not know whether its mother is one foot or a thousand miles distant. It has the whole language to learn, and then to learn the name of every object in the wide world with which it has to do. Think what it learns in the first two, in the first ten, in the first twenty years ! Between thirty and forty comes to be the time to judge and decide, to use the intellect and reason ; the time earlier than that is the time of acquisition. What a wonderful truth there is underlying the old story of the Sibyl, who made the offer of her treasures once, twice, thrice, each time diminishing the amount of the offer. Nine books were offered once and refused ; six books were offered once and refused ; and when the third offer came there were only three, and they were accompanied by the threat that if that last offer were rejected there would come no more. Knowledge comes to you now in the days of your youth like the Sibyl with her whole store, and offers it ; decline her offer for the next ten years, and she comes with a diminished stock ; ten years more and three fourths are gone, and when she comes with her last offering her declaration will be, " Take this or you receive nothing."

Be manly, then, in acquiring knowledge ; in getting a deep knowledge of the word of God, of the ethical relations that bind you to your fellows, and of the

duty you owe to the world ; go manfully forth, and do your work in the world ; exercise manliness first in the acquisition of knowledge, and then in the practical use of the understanding. Manliness will imply not only courage, but humility—and you must exercise humility, simply because you have not had the experience that others have had ; with that humility coupling manly determination to do whatever God brings to you to do ; and, with an eye single to his glory, use your faculties, relying upon them as far as God gives and preserves them, and so in understanding be men !

XVIII.

THE CHOIR OF VIRTUES.

Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity.—2 *Peter i*, 5–7.

STRIKING examples of single virtues have never been wanting in any age of the world. The heroes of ancient times were not all imaginary or legendary beings ; many of them were men of singular virtue in particular lines of human conduct. Aristides, for instance, was just long before Christ appeared upon the earth ; the patriotism of Leonidas filled the world with his fame ; the equanimity of Epictetus is a model to this day ; and so I might exhaust the catalogue of virtues one by one, and find in history, ancient or modern, stirring examples of each of them. But, brethren, it remained for Christianity to present a complete model of human character, which had never been presented before ; to reveal a complete, thorough, and symmetrical morality, perfect in all its parts, and perfect in their combination.

The passage I have chosen in your hearing this morning presents such a combination. We have been too much accustomed to consider this passage as merely a list of virtues that might be read as well backward as forward—separated, and each put in the form of an injunction, one in one place and one in another; as if the apostle had thrown them together fortuitously and without arrangement or sequence. In so viewing the passage we miss a great part of its power. You may find these separate virtues enjoined in other places of the New Testament, and many of them are enjoined in the law of nature and in systems of natural morality. It is the combination of them here, and the relation they bear to each other, the source from which they spring, and, so to speak, the aim and tendency of them, that forms the peculiar merit of the text to which I invite your attention. I might illustrate what I mean by saying briefly that each of these virtues has been considered as a gem, and that, taken up and examined, each by itself, they are thought to be a fine collection of jewels. Ah, brethren, it is not so; these are not single and individual gems, but each is part of a complete and perfect piece of jewelry, wrought out by the hands of the great Artificer himself, and unless we contemplate them as such in this their combination to each other, and in the beautiful setting

which God has given them—the frame-work, so to speak, of faith, which is the golden bond that holds them all together, and at the same time not merely illustrates and sets forth the beauty of each, but keeps them and clasps them together—if we do not so contemplate them, we do not get the full Christian idea of the virtues at all!

Or take an illustration from another single word—the word *choir*. This word contains in its etymology an allusion to the old Greek comedy, which had a leader and a series of singers or chorus, sometimes singing, sometimes speaking, and performing an important part in the drama, and there was a person who responded to the leader of the chorus, and so there was a union kept up by the leader at the beginning and the person charged with winding up the chorus at the end. The figure of the chorus, or choir, may be aptly applied to the Christian combination of virtues. The *choragus*, or leader of the chorus, is faith, which is in fact the foundation of the virtues, and the train is wound up with love, which is the highest aim and culminating point of all Christian virtue.

You observe that faith is the foundation of all Christian character. You have been taught this over and over again from this pulpit. So far as my own teaching is concerned, I have spoken to little purpose if you have not learned from it that there is no

Christianity where there is no faith ; that faith is the bond which unites man with God ; that it was so in the beginning in Eden ; that the rupture of this bond was the primal sin of all sins men commit ; that infidelity is still the primal fount and source of all transgression. That faith is the bond of union between God and man, and that there can be no connection between God and man without it, is taken for granted at the very foundation of the Christian life.

Taking that broad and fundamental foundation for granted, we are charged to build upon it a structure of moral character under the guidance of God's word, under the impulse of God's Spirit ; and this is the process of Christian sanctification, and it is to this process that these words apply. For whatever else sanctification is, rest assured it is ethical at bottom, moral in its essence and fruits. The work of the Holy Spirit in the heart has for its very end the formation of a pure and holy character. It was for this purpose that Christ was manifest, that he might destroy the works of the devil, and present before the world a pure, good, and peculiar people, zealous of good works. What then are the elements of this Christian character, and these virtues as set forth ? I have said that they are all beautifully combined together, and all harmonize in the formation of a perfect character. A very little analysis will per-

haps suffice to show this still more clearly. Shali I say that we find set forth, first, the duties we owe to ourselves—courage, knowledge, temperance, patience; then the duties we owe to God, summed up in the one single word, godliness or piety; and then the duties we owe to our fellows, summed up in the two other words, brotherly kindness and charity? You may have never thought of this analysis before, or that there was in this text any thing like a system of ethics, and yet all you can say in connection with any system of ethics is here—personal virtues, virtues in our relation to God and in our relation to our fellow-men. There is nothing more you can say, nothing beyond this in ethics apart from Christianity; all is here. There are some branches of ethics not especially named in this classification, but they all spring out of it.

Or they might be classed perhaps in two divisions: the personal virtues of the Christian and the social virtues of the Christian, as springing out of his faith and leading into it—the personal virtues, courage, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness; the social virtues, relating to his dealings with his fellows, brotherly kindness and charity.

“Add to your faith virtue.” The word virtue I shall not use in the ordinary sense in which it has come to be regarded: the apostle used it in the legitimate sense of the Latin word from which it is

derived—courage, boldness, manliness—that which constituted the chief glory of man in the old heathen estimation, and was to a certain extent carried over in a sanctified and elevated sense into the Christian ethics of the New Testament. There is no place in the system of Christian morality for cowardice or imbecility. They strangely err who suppose our faith can be manifested by cowardice. There is among men of the world a sneering way of treating of Christianity as if it were, in and of itself, imbecile, or tending to imbecility and weakness of character. Whether we look at the precepts of the Bible, or the grand historical examples of the Bible, or the development of the Christian life among men in history—and these are the tests by which any theory or system should be tried—we shall find that the noblest illustrations of courage and manliness, in the highest and purest sense of the word, have been afforded in connection with Christianity. A strenuous tone and vigor of soul is the language in which we should interpret this word “virtue.” We want this boldness in standing up for the truth of God, in the example which we ourselves shall set in keeping to our religious faith in time of trouble and adversity. You may say, The time for such examples has passed away. It was very well for Paul and Peter to exhibit such heroism when a man had to take his life in his hand, but we do not want these endow-

ments now. Ah, brethren, we need to pray just as earnestly now as Peter and John prayed in the midst of a threatening and persecuting mob, "O Lord, grant that with all boldness we may speak thy word!" He deceives himself sadly who thinks that the time of conflict is over; that it is possible now to be carried to heaven on "flowery beds of ease." Now as ever,

They that mean to win the prize
Must sail through bloody seas.

The work is not yet done, the battle is not yet over; nay, my brethren, the very heat of it is to begin. The worst weapons of the adversary are yet kept in his hellish arsenal: we are only at the beginning of them. If I have correctly read the prophecies of this Book, the greatest demands upon the Church of God for boldness, energy, and self-sacrifice have yet to be made upon it. Nay, how much of boldness do you not need in your daily occupations and intercourse with men! You are living in a world, after all, hostile to Christ. Your every-day business is hostile to Christ; not that there is any thing in trade or business necessarily hostile to Christ, but these are not sanctified; the world has not given itself up to Christ, the world's trade and activities are not consecrated to Christ; and, having to do with the world, we need to be bold, in order to show ourselves true citizens of the great city of God.

We sometimes think Pilate showed a great deal of weakness when he most needed manliness and courage — upon the bench, when, satisfied of the innocence of Christ, yet fond of flattering the mob, he let him go, lest there should be a tumult, to that painful death upon Calvary. We do not need to go back many generations in history to find men sitting upon the bench as judges, and professing to be Christian men, not as that poor Pilate was — a simple searcher after the truth — but men who profess to have found the everlasting truth, and to be holding an even scale of justice in their hands, affording instances of greater weakness ; yielding in the face of light, sometimes for filthy lucre, sometimes for fear of loss of honor, as Pilate feared the dread power of the mob ; in any case showing more weakness and deeper sinfulness than Pilate. So, too, we think of the rich young man who came to the Lord Jesus, to all appearance seeking earnestly for the salvation of his soul — as he no doubt was sincerely seeking — and asking the Master what he should do to be saved ; and when Christ came to the last injunction, and said, “ Sell all thou hast and give to the poor,” we think he was weak, and lacked the strenuous courage that the Holy Spirit gives to the Christian life. He was willing to believe, but when it came to adding to his faith courage to do the very deed that was to be the test of his devotion, then he failed.

My brethren, if the same injunction were brought to you to-day, do you suppose that you would do any better? If a poor wretched beggar comes to your door to-morrow, no matter whether he has made himself a beggar by his own drunkenness and debauchery or not, will you not turn him away? If the Church of Christ comes with a demand for a small portion of your abundance, you have excuses enough, plausible, rational, and sensible, according to the world's mode of viewing these things, to turn the application away. Remember that young man in the Gospel, and do not call him weak until you have examined into your own weakness, and found out the secret source of it. Christianity requires courage now as much as ever it did, and the demands are to be stronger yet; you will be called upon to make greater sacrifices instead of less; to do more individually with your money and in your efforts for the advancement of the cause of Christ. Add to your faith courage, and be bold to do your Master's work.

This courage is not all that you are to have. "And to virtue knowledge;" temper your energy and zeal with discretion. Perhaps it is not necessary to say any thing on this point to this congregation, for I do not think there are any of us who have not discretion enough. And yet the injunction is here, and the tendency in human nature, after all, is to run to an extreme, so that zeal becomes fanaticism. Zeal

which is not according to knowledge, faith which is not accompanied by growth in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, is in an unsafe condition. Even this very passage of Peter is filled with exhortation to knowledge. "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you"—how? "Through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things." And the winding up of the whole passage is, "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." And perhaps this lesson may be more needed by the young than by the old, who have got discretion with their years. See, then, that all your courageous devotion be accompanied by a studious advancement in the knowledge of the Lord. Make the word of God the source of this knowledge, and you shall find such lessons of wisdom and discretion as will prevent you from running into the errors of a vain enthusiasm or fanaticism. There is no "one idea" about Christianity either in its theology or in its morals ; all is symmetrical and harmonious ; and we find in this passage, and in numerous other passages of the Scriptures, ample warning against that morality which runs itself out in one idea. Be bold enough to take up an idea when it requires to be made prominent, but add to your courage knowledge, and rein in your activity, if necessary, by Christian discretion.

The next element is temperance, and to temper-

ance is conjoined patience. Or, to express it in other words, the elements of success in life consist of bearing and forbearing, and these two things are patience and temperance. Or, to express it again in the formula of old heathen writers on morality, Abstain and sustain ; forbearing or abstaining being temperance, and having relation to prosperity ; and sustaining or bearing having relation to adversity. Our life is a life of either prosperity or adversity, or at least it is comparatively one or the other. Sometimes we are doing well in our outward circumstances, prosperous in our families, our children living and getting on well around us ; or we are unfortunate, and death invades our family circle, and blow after blow falls upon us. My text provides the duty for each of these conditions of human life. In your prosperous days add to your faith courage, and to courage knowledge, and take the great lesson of temperance—moderation in indulgence, moderation in what may appear your social duties ; and then, when your day of adversity or sorrow comes, be patient—patient in the suffering under the injuries men may inflict upon you ; patient under the infirmities of others with whom you may be associated. Abstain from extravagant shows ; sustain all that may come upon you in the order of divine arrangements into which you are thrown.

These virtues are knitted together by the last of

this class of personal duties—piety towards God. This duty is not to be taken in so broad a sense as to include all faith, goodness, holiness, but the duty of piety in the exercise of reverence, of worship ; in a continual sense of the divine presence. It is thus that piety binds together these other virtues, and keeps them from falling asunder. So our duties should be bound each to each by constant reference to God, morning, noon, and night, in prayer, and by a sort of understood reference in every hour of every day's life ; having God and our duties to God understood in the course of our business, in our relations to society and each other ; then we shall be more faithful, more knowing, more temperate, more patient.

Let us glance at the social virtues which spring out of the personal and depend upon them, and which have a beautiful illustration in the text and in the course of our human life. Add to your godliness brotherly kindness and charity. These social duties are subdivided into those which belong to the inner household, and those which belong to the wider sphere of life. And here the text has special point for those recently admitted into the Church. A good deal of our advancement in grace will depend upon our love of the brethren. This is made a test of Christian character by every one of the apostles. John makes it almost the sole test. "Hereby we know we love God, because we love the brethren." Do not attempt

to keep up a Christian character without this element. I have known men to be members of a Church for ten, twenty, or thirty years, and have no more sympathy for those who sat in the next pew than if they belonged to some other Church ; men who are, perhaps, hard and unsympathizing by nature. If there be any such here, do not put this matter off by saying, " That is my nature, and I cannot get over it. I am not an especially unsympathizing person, but do not find it easy to make outward demonstration of the affection that is within." A sanctified Christian loves the brethren, and the more of Christ he has, the more he loves Christ's Church that He has purchased with His own blood. And if you have an indisposition to Christian communion, strive to overcome it ; be punctual at your class-meeting every week for the next three months, and cherish in your heart this love for your neighbor and your brethren. Cultivate cordial and social intercourse with those who are members of the same Church, and keep up a closer, warmer fellowship for them. Oh for a baptism of the Holy Ghost upon the Church, that all its members may love one another ; love the character of each other, the interests of each other, the personal virtues of each other ! that all this may be a matter of individual interest and mutual sympathy !

Brotherly kindness implies a relation in the Church and the duties that spring from that relation ; and

after it, last of all, comes charity, which is still wider in its scope, and includes the other in itself. It is put at the end, as the culmination of the Christian virtues. Shall I go back to the figure I used at the beginning, and say, if you make a bracelet out of these virtues, that faith is the golden setting that holds them all together, and that courage, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness—that these are the pearls that are set about it; some of them a little larger than the others, and apparently more costly, but still each a pearl of great price, and in the centre of them all this diamond of everlasting worth, the purest of the list, because it shines with the light of God, and God is love. Add to your brotherly kindness the expansive love that takes in all men; that knows not the limit of Church or sect, of fellowship or communion, but says to all that are members of Christ's Church of every name, "These are my brethren," and that goes beyond the limit of Christ's Church, and says to the outcast and the worldling, "These, too, are purchased with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ," and that wanders beyond the limits of our native land and over seas to distant climes, and says to men of dusky hue, "All these are bought with the blood of Jesus Christ—these are my brethren." It is to this broad and expansive affection that the text invites you.

Add to brotherly kindness, charity—a love of every

human being, the worst and lowest—not because he is bad, but love him because he is a human being, made in the image of God, bought by the sacrifice of Christ, and may enter into the gates of the eternal city, to be with you in that immortal fellowship evermore; and because as such you owe him certain duties—kindness, sympathy, love, active personal self-sacrifice, if need be, for his conversion, for his advancement, growth, and elevation in the scale of civilization.

I think you will agree with me that my text has afforded, not an unconnected series of injunctions, but a symmetrical combination, forming a perfect Christian character. I would call your attention to the healthful tone of the sanctification of which the text speaks and the Bible every-where speaks. There is nothing false or meretricious, nothing of morbid sentimentalism, about it. There is the development of all that is tender and lovely in our human nature, but there is nothing mawkish or lackadaisical about it. These virtues are sturdy, substantial virtues, and, when combined, their combination forms a perfect character. There is no sanctification enjoined in this text, or anywhere else in the word of God, in the sense of seclusion or keeping away, even from wicked people. The whole system of monasticism and seclusion, and shutting ourselves away from our fellow-men, plausible I admit it is, and has seduced some

of the very purest minds in the whole Church of God for ages after ages—perhaps the very purest have been found within the limits of monasteries—but the idea is false, and contrary to God's plans for the propagation of the Gospel. And what has been the consequence? The outcropping fruit of it was destruction and death. The whole monastic system ended—for what is now upon the earth is only the shadow of what it used to be—in the foulest corruption. The very aim of Christianity is that we shall exercise brotherly love and charity. What sort of an exercise of it would it be for me to have my head shaved and wear no matter what kind of a garment in token of humiliation, and live in a cell in meditative seclusion? Any imitation of monasticism ought to be avoided. I should say that the imitation of it, even in so small and accidental a way as in the matter of peculiar dress, partakes of the same false character, and will, in the long run, lead to similar evil results. That excellent society called the Society of Friends or Quakers has been hampered in the development of the Christian life and the propagation of the Gospel by the adoption of a peculiar dress.

I do not mean that it is right for us to follow the fashion of the time, whatever that fashion may be, in any kind of extravagance. It is the tendency of the human mind to run into extremes. Put a drunken man on horseback, and he will oscillate

from side to side, now on this side, now on that, in vain endeavoring to keep the balance of a well-trained rider. There is no warrant in Christianity for wasteful or foolish expenditure or outlay upon the person. All this is to be ruled by temperance and moderation, so as to run into no extreme. But, on the other hand, the attempt to mark this Church, or that, by a uniform or regimentals, and so to separate it and set it apart from the world, is part of the old monastic idea, and must come to nought.

Our duty is to live in this world, and do all the good we can in it. We are put in a certain system of society which God upholds as the very theatre of His kingdom upon the earth. It is here that the great problem of the world's salvation is to be wrought out ; and you and I, as individual agents for Christ's kingdom, are to do His work. You may mingle with all men of every class and every creed ; you have no need to shrink from them ; but take care that you fall not into the ways of these men from sheer cowardice, on the one hand trying to save your soul, on the other hand yielding to the current and thinking you are safe because you go with the stream. You are put into a worldly atmosphere, but only to purify it. You are, perhaps, a student. Your studies are to be secular studies—science, literature—apart from the study of the word of God ; and yet none of these studies is secular if consecrated to the serv-

ice of God. And so it is in every walk of life. If we have faith at bottom we shall consecrate our activities in all lines of duty to God's service. But remember, he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. That is to say, as a backslider he has wandered among the dogs and sorcerers of the earth, has surrendered his primal, trusting faith, and has returned to all his old evil ways. Ah, if there be a backsliding soul here to-day may God's Spirit reach it and bring it back again, and make its calling and election sure !

XIX.

LOVE UNUTTERABLE.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.—*John iii, 16.*

THERE may be some of you who will say that this class of themes is too often introduced ; that exhibitions of the love of God through Christ, however beautiful they may be, are not the most practical subjects to be taken up in the pulpit. Brethren, it is with this as with every other doctrine of Scripture. In the word of God doctrines are only presented practically and for practical ends. This doctrine—the doctrine of redemption by Christ—rests upon a great fact, the history of which is recorded here ; the greatest fact in the whole history of humanity. The application of that fact in the salvation of the race of mankind is the most practical thing with which mankind can be concerned. The preaching of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is, in fact, the sum and substance of our Gospel preaching, and must be so if we are faithful to our trust.

Is the theme unattractive? Not so, certainly, for those whose souls are filled with love to God ; they that hear the most of it are those that love it most ; and they that love it most desire to hear the most of it. Those that are deepest bathed in the love of the Lord Jesus Christ look most longingly for fresh showers of his love ; just as the water lily, in the midst of waters, unfolds its broad leaves, and opens its petals to receive the refreshing showers with a fresher and more earnest sympathy than does the parched shrub in the sandy desert. It is only the soul that has no love that does not care to hear of love ; and so, if we love God, we are never tired of hearing the story of His love through Christ ; and if we do not love Him, there is no story that ought to be brought oftener to our ears. For, after all, if "the Son of man, when he is lifted up," does not draw men's hearts unto Him, there is no other power that will ; if the cross of Christ be not a loadstone for your soul, there is no magnetism in heaven or earth that can draw you from your sins ; if there be for you no beauty in this picture, then turn to the world's pictures, for they are all that you can look upon. On the other hand, for souls that feel the need of the Saviour, or those that have sought and found salvation in Jesus Christ as a Redeemer, this theme is ever pleasant ; and when we preach on any theme, no matter how far it may be apparently removed from

this great theme of redemption by Christ, this will be the foundation—the backbone, so to speak—of every structure we may attempt to rear. And so, when preaching upon other doctrines—as the matter of education, the subject of missionary enterprise, the forms of public worship, the practical exercise of Christian charity and benevolence, no matter what—if the preacher's heart is imbued with the love of God and his mind is awake to the full breadth of his mission, and at the same time to the narrowness of it, you will always recognize as the thread upon which the pearls of his thought may be strung—if he has pearls of thought to show you—the doctrine of man's salvation through a crucified Redeemer. And so, too, if you look back upon your own experience in listening to sermons, you remember that whenever you caught a glimpse of that cross shining, though through a subject quite foreign, your heart has always been touched, you have been quickened, and an instant joy diffused through your mind, which rendered you more awake to the rest of the discourse than you would otherwise have been. If you listen to a new composition of music quite foreign to any thing you have been in the habit of hearing, you may listen unmoved for ten, fifteen, or twenty minutes, when suddenly there comes, in the midst of the complication of strange harmony, a single measure of a melody to which your ear has been accustomed, and

which twined itself around your heart long years ago ; it quickens the musical thought within you, and connects itself with those tender associations, and you are at once able to enjoy all the rest. So it is, or so it should be, with this exposition of the doctrine of the Son of God : there is no sermon in which we should not be willing to behold the cross of the bleeding Saviour.

In our text we find two things with regard to this theme. First, the ground of God's purpose in the redemption of the world. The ground of it lies in his love. "God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son." And, secondly, the purpose of God in the redemption of the world, namely, that "whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And these are the two points to be made in the discourse.

First, the ground of God's purpose in the redemption of the world, as set forth in this passage. If you are well read in books of theology you will find that there has been a vast deal of controversy concerning the ground and source of God's purpose in the redemption of mankind : some maintaining that it was intended to vindicate God's mercy, others that it was to exemplify his justice, and so through a variety of opinions. The simplest is the most natural interpretation. In view of the whole word of God, and especially of such passages as this, the simplest

meaning is that which the text gives, that, after all, we need look no further than to the love of God for the source of His mercy in redemption.

Sometimes we think of the scheme of Christian salvation through Christ as the result of a sort of conflict between the attributes of God : a strife between His inherent justice demanding the destruction of a guilty world, and, on the other hand, His mercy and love desiring to save the world. I have heard a great deal of incautious statement in the pulpit on this subject, and have seen incautious pictures, painted by skillful artists, of such sort as this, for instance : the Mercy of God on one hand pleading anxiously, with uplifted hands and streaming eyes, and on the other side Justice, with stern countenance and drawn sword, standing ready to cut down the sinner and the world of sinners : the conflict going on between them, and, as it were, the Almighty mind listening to the arguments, and at last inclining to the side of Mercy. All this may be very dramatic and very striking, but unfortunately it is not true. The preacher may conjure up a mighty and grand combination of figures, an apotheosis of faculties of his own which he transfers to God. But in all this we lose sight of the character of God—the one true God in whom there can be no conflict ; in whose eternal mind there never has been any conflict ; in whose all-seeing intellect there never can be a shadow, a

moment of doubt or uncertainty : in whose almighty heart there never has been any but the vastest and most unbounded love ; in such pictures we lose sight of the character of God, who is all love, all mercy, all compassion.

So we are told by this very same evangelist in the fourth chapter of the first epistle : “ He that loveth not knoweth not God,” and why ? “ For,” says he—and it is the best definition for our poor souls of the character of God given us in the Bible—“ for God is love :” it is inherent in God to love, the essence of God is love, and the approach unto God on the part of man is an approach in the way of love. Our character approximates more and more to the character of God just in proportion to the amount of our love. And that family in which there is most love is most like the family of heaven ; and that nation in which there is most love is purest and best ; and when the world shall come to be all full of love, then, and no sooner, will wars, oppressions, and cruelties cease upon the earth ; then “ man’s inhumanity to man ” shall no longer “ make countless thousands mourn.” So we find from the very nature of God, as well as from this and other texts, that we are to seek the root and ground of Christ’s plan of salvation in the love of God the Father. “ In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the

world that we might live through him." In the words of one of our most beautiful hymns,

" But when we view thy strange design
To save rebellious worms,
Where vengeance and compassion join
In their divinest forms,
Here the whole Deity is known."

Here is the manifestation of God's love unto the world ; here in the gift of Christ, and it is nowhere else for you or for me.

There is obviously in the text an allusion to the passage in Genesis—the history of Abraham's offering of his son Isaac—and the words of Christ to Nicodemus could not fail to remind Nicodemus of the love that was required in Abraham's sacrifice. It was his son ; it was his only son, Isaac ; it was his only son, Isaac, whom he loved. The text reminded Nicodemus then, and ought to remind us now, of the *love* that was required in Abraham's sacrifice ; then, also, of the *substitution* that was made in that case for Abraham's sacrifice ; finally, of the *promise* given to Abraham in view of his obedience. " The angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing"—observe now the next verse—" and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son," then says God, " I promise, and swear as well as promise, " that in bless-

ing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore, and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice." That is the covenant made with Abraham, the covenant by virtue of which Christ came out of the family of David, at once the root and the offspring of David ; that is the covenant in the fulfilment of which, in the fulness of time, God was manifest in the flesh in Jesus Christ, who was sent to take upon himself the form of a servant for the redemption of mankind.

In that seed all the nations of the earth *have* been blessed. And why ? Simply because of that one act of obedience ? Did Abraham produce by that act of his this grand promise, of which all the history of all nations, from that day to this, has only been the partial fulfilment ?—this promise, of which all history that is to come, with all the pomp of its vast displays of power in science and in arts, shall only be a part of the great fulfilment—was this promise made to Abraham as a payment for this one act of obedience ? No, brethren, we cannot for a moment look at it so. How, then, can we look at it, if not in this way ? That this whole transaction between Abraham and God, in the gift of his son Isaac, was part of God's plan of revealing Himself and the mode of

salvation to the world.* It was a prophecy, unconscious doubtless on the part of Abraham, but a prophecy which God meant should be fully displayed in due time by that other sacrifice, in which a Son more beloved than Isaac, an only Son, and an only Son of God, should be laid upon an altar, and no substitute for Him be found ; that other sacrifice, which was to wind up in the history of the world all forms of sacrifice ; that altar, which was to be the last upon which, for ever and ever, a sacrificial pyre should burn upon which God could look with complacency ; that victim, which was to be the last victim, and the only one on whom could be laid the iniquities of men ; it was to foreshadow that altar and that sacrifice that this touching scene occurred upon the mountain of Moriah : it was to let men know, at least by a glimpse of what was to come, that God meant some day to show forth his mercy to mankind. So at least we are taught to regard it in the New Testament ; and one of the richest passages in the New Testament is nothing but an allusion to this sacrifice of Abraham. In the eighth chapter of the Romans and thirty-second verse we read : “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall he not with Him also freely give us all things?” Do you not see the allusion in that passage ? In Genesis the promise is, “Because thou

hast done this thing, and hast not spared thy son, thine only son."

Contrast this manifestation of God's love with any other occasion in the history of the world and you will find it is the greatest. But I dare not attempt to make such a comparison, to compare the love of God in the gift of his Son for the redemption of the world with any display of love that could come out of such hearts as ours ; the infinite with the finite. There is a passage in St. Bernard very striking, not so much for the matter as the arrangement, a series or gradation, by which he endeavored to draw up the the hearts of his hearers to higher and grander thoughts of divine love. He says, first, It was God who loved us when we, poor creatures of His, ought to have loved Him first. Secondly, he goes on, He loved us, such as we were. It was while we were yet sinners that Christ died for us. Thirdly, He that loved us, that is greater than the heavens, and that made the heavens and the earth, He deigns to come down to us that are but dust and ashes, and say to each one of us, " Let me be your Saviour !" The Almighty says this to you and to me by this text this morning. Let us endeavor to raise our poor hearts to the contemplation of this vast love ; let us exalt our Saviour in our thoughts and feelings, as we endeavor to think of God's infinite love to us ; let us endeavor to catch one glimpse of that tran-

scendent beauty which shines forever from the cross of our Saviour.

“O Love Divine, how sweet thou art,
When shall I find my willing heart
All taken up by thee !”

Is this our utterance this morning ?

“Stronger His love than death or hell ;
Its riches are unsearchable ;
The first-born sons of light
Desire in vain its depths to see ;
They cannot reach the mystery,
The length, the breadth, the height.”

God grant that we may feel this day, each one for himself, that love which passeth knowledge !

And now let us glance, in the second place, at the purpose of God in the redemption of mankind. You will observe that the latter part of the sixteenth verse is but a repetition of the fifteenth. “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Within two or three lines we have a duplication of this statement, as if to fix, by this reiteration, the thought in our mind of the full character of God’s purpose in this display of his mercy and love, that mankind should not perish, but have everlasting life.

The substance of the purpose and its extent are both set forth in the text. It implies the danger of perishing, on the part of mankind, as all

the Bible does ; that mankind was perishing, had perished ; that the human race had been separated from God, the author of the race ; that there was a great gulf fixed between man and God. This fact the text presupposes. Time and again I have endeavored to enforce upon you this great truth, that the whole world out of Christ lieth in wickedness ; and I have appealed to your own individual consciousness for your own individual condition, and I appeal to it now, and make no other point. Not a single man or woman in this house, upon an honest, sincere scrutiny of his own individual heart, can say that his life, and thoughts, and feelings have been pure before Almighty God. Is there one ? Is there a single man or woman who will rise up to-day in this congregation and say that he is the immaculate one ? Is there one here who would be entitled of his own justice, purity, and virtue to take charge of his brethren, and be their censor and teacher ? It is not I, I am sure. And if this is the case with each of us in his own individual personal consciousness, do you suppose the consciousness of the rest of mankind differs from yours ? that you are worse than they ? Never, unless in some access of great conviction from the Holy Spirit like that which induced the Apostle Paul to say he was the chief of sinners. On the contrary, you think you are as good as your neighbors, and perhaps better. But you dare

not, for one moment, utter to yourself the thought that your life is a pure one. On the contrary, if you give an honest statement, it must be that the preponderance of thought has been evil, except so far as you have taken the great truths of God's holy word, and endeavored to frame your habits of life and modes of action upon these laws. This is "perishing;" this condition of life is the condition of which the text speaks in the word "perishing." The man has perished who has a preponderance of evil in his nature. Upon this broad platform of depravity all men stand together, whatever their distinctions may be as to education or place of birth, or the character of their civilization. On this broad platform of depravity we meet as brethren, black, and white, and red, Caucasian, Malay, and every other race of mankind. Under all the mere difference that distinguishes these there is a substantial sameness. Take two men from the extremes of society, strip one of his purple and the other of his rags, and in both you will see the same foundation of personal character, except God makes a distinction by the blessing of His Holy Spirit. So then we are all lost. "In Adam," to speak in the language of this book, "we have all died," and we must die. It was to avert this doom that God "gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Should not perish" and "have

everlasting life" present to a certain extent the same idea, the latter being an amplification of the former. The one expresses the power to avert the doom of death ; but the other shows that the doom of death is not only averted for the time, or for *a* time, but for evermore.

And here we ought to dwell for one moment on this thought, that the doom is averted, not for the time, or for a time, but for evermore. This is the fruit of the great salvation which Christ brings. And see the point of this thought. We might suppose that after death our life was to be prolonged for a hundred or two hundred years, or for a series of generations. But what security would we have that then it would not end ? that after the lapse of a hundred years or a hundred centuries there might not come a termination or a change ? This is the point of the clause which says believers shall have everlasting life, in contradistinction to the clause which says they shall not perish. By the one we are told that our life is prolonged at all events ; by the other that our life is prolonged infinitely. We are given here the promise that we shall live forever, and that promise is fortified and vindicated for us by the gift of the Son of God as our Redeemer. "Because I live you shall live also." There is the pledge of our eternity ; there is the root and ground on which this promise rests. He that believeth on Him shall not

perish, but have everlasting life, because he is incorporated with Christ. Christ is the head of this new life that comes in with the Gospel, and we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ in his eternity. So then, brethren, when you are tempted to believe that the Second Person of the Adorable Trinity is not the Son of God, you may begin to fear that the time may come when you shall cease to be ; when you believe that that crown, which was once a crown of thorns and is now a crown of glory, shall be shaken from our Redeemer, then may you well fear that the time shall come when your life shall have an end. But why talk of these things, except to bring your minds up to the height of this great argument ?

In the salvation that comes to us through Jesus Christ we are assured of immortality, and in that alone are we assured of it ; because we are united with Christ, who is himself inherently immortal, divine, and so imperishable. We, too, are immortal, and shall live forever. When I have passed through the gates of that eternal city I shall know that my citizenship will last as long as the city itself. Thank God for that assurance ! that the salvation of God through Christ gives to us the assurance of everlasting life ! But this everlasting life has a beginning in every individual soul ; and this beginning is found in the individual soul whenever, sunk in trespasses and sins, the soul is quickened unto a new life by the

power of God's Holy Spirit. The believing sinner, we are told, passes from death to life here in this world—from a death in sin to a life in righteousness. This is the beginning of the everlasting life. Its seeds are sown in the heart of every believer just when he gives his soul to God : its seeds are cast into the soil of your heart whenever you open it, and say, "I give myself to be redeemed."

Here, again, we come to the thought of last Sunday fortnight, the sin of unbelief. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Or take the eighteenth verse with it, "He that believeth in Christ is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already." Why? Because he has been a sinner? a transgressor? an adulterer? in trade dishonest, in person or habits foul? Not at all; that condemnation is under the law; but here is the condemnation, "Because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Now, then, I put it to you again that, if you are persisting in the rejection of Christ, you are committing the sin of sins by your unbelief in Christ; that it wraps up within itself all other sins; that in cherishing it you cherish the whole circle of transgressions, and are guilty of them all; not actually and substantially guilty, but condemned as if guilty of them all.

Lastly, let us look at the extent of this purpose. "For God so loved *the world*." What does this term

“world” mean? All mankind. Take the seventeenth verse as the measure of it. “God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world.” You would see at once that it means all the world. “God sent His Son into the world that the world through Him might be saved.” What does it mean there? The whole world of sinners? Some people say not. I do not know how it could mean all mankind in the first part and not in the last. The extent of this work of Christ in redemption is just as broad as the effects of sin; as sin has tainted all mankind, this salvation brings health to all mankind; as sin has corrupted all nations, this salvation shall be to all nations; as all races are alike in relation to sin, all races are included in this salvation; it comes to all classes alike. It comes to all races of men alike, no matter what distinction outwardly there may be, because these distinctions have nothing to do with their humanity or with their sin. The black skin, the white skin, the red skin, do these interfere with the claims of God upon the human soul? Have they any relation to the offering of Christ upon Moriah for the sins of mankind? There is no respect of persons with God—none, none, none; and no respect of persons with Christ. He himself sprung from a race, though royal, yet debased. He sprung up in the midst of a nation which, though once at the head of the nations, was then the laughing-stock of the polished Greeks

and despised by the sterner and more philosophic Romans ; which to this day is not merely disliked, but despised ; most meanly and unjustly. A noble man, above all, a man trained in the pure Gospel, has no such feeling ; he durst not despise his fellow-being, least of all under the shadow of the cross.

And now for the practical lesson of the text. First, for ourselves, as individuals, the practical question is, Have we any share in the blessing which this text offers ? “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” What a comprehensive promise it is ! Is it nothing to you, this promise ? Have you believed ? Are you saved ? Do you feel to-day that you are a child of God ? that this infinite love of God has found you out ?

Secondly, our own love of God should be exalted ; we should endeavor to nourish our minds into grand views of God as our infinite loving Father ; and especially should we seek to get these views by contemplating Him in the gift of His Son—His infinite love that spared not his only Son, but freely offered Him for us ; by dwelling upon the manifestation of His love in suffering the death of Christ upon the cross—the death of matchless agony, the measure of matchless love. By nourishing our minds into grand views of God, and exalting our Saviour in our

thoughts, we lift ourselves above the miserable atmosphere of human strifes and passions.

Thirdly, as there is no respect of persons with God, so we are bound to love all mankind, as all mankind alike share in this infinite goodness and love ; we are bound to cherish for all mankind the feeling of brotherhood. A great deal is said of philanthropy and benevolence doing this thing and that thing for the good of the race. If we are only penetrated by the love of Christ, philanthropy cannot be a task, but becomes a pleasure. When the soul is filled with love it is no sacrifice to do what otherwise would be a sacrifice. When your being is completely in harmony with Christ, it is more difficult to refrain from doing good than to do good. Colonizing Africa, getting rid of slavery, educating the common people, building asylums for the poor and the outcast, sending the word of life to the perishing millions of the race—are the natural bloom of Christian benevolence, the efflorescence of the love of Christ : the soul filled with God's love becomes itself a fountain of all holy desires and Christ-like charities : bathed in the celestial atmosphere, it emits the fragrance of heaven.

THE END.

